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ABSTRACT

As a collection of articles this book is intended for use as a guide for planning and building teacher centers. The beginning articles tell how a combination of convictions, experience, high energy, and happenstance formed the first American teacher centers. The next several articles focus on practical matters such as staffing, needs assessment, evaluation, programming, space, funding, and others. The final three articles focus on centers' relationships with school districts and with parents and community. (DS)

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# BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

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*edited by*
*Kathleen Devaney*

# BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

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# PREFACE

Back in 1976 when it became apparent that eventually the federal government would provide support for local teachers' centers, a group of staff members in experienced "grassroots" centers formed a writing circle to make a guidebook for people who would be forming new centers. Their first brainstorming meeting — a postlude to the U.S. Office of Education's national teacher center institute in May 1976 — was held at the Dubliner, a restaurant on F Street Northwest in Washington, almost within shouting distance of the Senate Office Building where the first teacher center legislation was being written.

After that meeting, the Teachers' Centers Exchange provided travel support for the guidebook's co-writers — from the Teacher Curriculum Work Center of Chicago, the Kansas City Learning Exchange, and the Learning Center of Saint Louis — to work together a few days every few months during the 1976-77 school year. The writers donated their time and writing.

We called the project the "How-to Manual," but it soon became clear that this was a misnomer, as none of the parties involved wished to presume to tell anyone precisely how to start a center, there being no one way. What the writers wanted to do was to share their own experiences in starting, maintaining, and improving three independent teachers' centers and to inspire and stimulate readers to find their own ways and means for beginning, whether independently or with institutional support. The fruits of the group's year of work are seen in the core articles of this book — the articles on programming, managing, and provisioning space in a center.

As 1977-78 and the new O.E. Teacher Centers Program came upon us, it became clear that a half-dozen staff members responsible for keeping their own teachers' centers alive and well could not on a volunteer basis and in their spare time write a whole book on all aspects of teacher-centering. So the Exchange began to request other people in the network of centers we serve to write about more aspects and issues of center work. In the editing of some of these articles, additional advice has been inserted from the Proceedings of "Workparties" — small conferences of teachers' center leaders and participants — which the Exchange has sponsored since 1977. Thus the book represents the substance — grassroots experience — and the style — self-reflection and voluntary sharing with others — of the teachers' centers network.

Since 1974 we at the Teachers' Centers Exchange have been enmeshed in this network, which becomes ever wider and more entwined as we meet new teachers' center advocates and aspirants, as we make matches among our correspondents who express common enthusiasms or face similar problems, and as we introduce beginners in the movement to old hands. We continue to refer to the network and to ourselves with an "s" and apostrophe after "teacher" simply as a way of emphasizing the origins of the network and the movement, and from our belief that teachers can and should own a teachers' center—or own their own work in a center—as a way of taking responsibility for their own professional growth. As the news of this format for staff development has spread, the plainer usage "teacher center" has gained more common currency but perhaps less precise meaning.

We try to be part of the national dialogue about teacher centers, whatever the definition or context, but we also are mindful of a particular identity that goes back a decade to the first American centers. This identity is made up of several propositions, which if not self-evident to the whole of American education, are at least persuasive enough to build a busy national network on. These propositions are as follows:

- American education is a very wide stream, fed by innumerable freshets, eddies, currents, tributaries. The informal ways of teaching referred to as "developmental," "experiential," "open," constitute one of the substreams or traditions in American education. It is a tradition going back at least to Henry David Thoreau, and it has been fed by countless seasoned practitioners as well as wise philosophers. The tradition was in flood in the sixties when the first teachers' centers were started, and it has receded just now, but it is still strong and viable; there is excellent evidence that the informal approach is the most practical and reliable way to teach children of widely differing learning levels in the same classroom. The approach, however, does require serious, confident, and ingenious teachers with productive connections to other teachers and to learning resources in the community at large. Hence teachers' centers!
- The strategy of involving the good teachers' strengths and the searching teachers' motivation to improve their work is more likely to kindle a staff development program that can pull in change-resistant teachers, than is a strategy of pinpointing failures and mandating attendance at generalized uplift programs. What a teachers' center has going for it is, essentially, not expert books and technology but capable people willing to learn and share.
- Less is more when it comes to organizing educational fix-it enterprises. A teachers' center (one in which teachers will take ownership and responsibility for their learning and for the center) does not need to be small, but it should be fitting in scale to the purposes stated. If the purpose is to facilitate *individual* growth, then scale must be intimate enough for participants to feel

like individuals, not like part of the proletarian masses. If a teachers' center is to make participants feel like individuals, it must be flexible and sometimes bend or challenge the system's habits. A teachers' center has not to copy the bureaucracy.

If these propositions interest you, we invite you to tap into the network by writing or calling us up (415—565-3095). We answer questions, make referrals, have conversations, circulate teachers' center-produced materials, sponsor meetings, give talks, and publish papers and books. Among the latter are a 1977 *Directory* of the network and a 1978 *Supplement*, a 1977 collection of papers entitled *Essays on Teachers' Centers*, and four Occasional Papers on themes in teachers' center practice. All of this work is supported by the National Institute of Education Program on Educational Policy and Organization.

The articles in the book need not be read sequentially, but they are informally grouped. At the beginning are two articles telling how a combination of convictions, experience, high energy, and happenstance formed the first American teachers' centers. There follow several articles on practical matters: staffing, needs assessment, evaluation, programming, space, funding, and others. Finally there are three articles on centers' relationships with school districts and with parents and community.

— Kathleen Devaney
San Francisco
September 1978

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writing in this book represents not only the authors' expertise and opinion but also that of their colleagues in many experienced American teachers' centers. Participants at Teachers' Centers Exchange Workparties offered ideas that were reported in Proceedings and then inserted into several articles in this book. Support for printing of the Proceedings came from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. The Ford Foundation contributed funds to the study of administrators' support for teachers' centers. The Teachers' Centers Exchange is supported by the Educational Policy and Organization Program of the National Institute of Education.

I would like to thank the photographers who ably captured the life and times of teachers' centers' activities and people: Kazuhiro Tsuruta (cover and other photos taken at sessions of the former Teachers' Active Learning Center, San Francisco); Ruth Kreitzman (photo page 44, taken at a meeting of the New York State United Teachers; all other photos taken at the Fordham/District 3 Learning Center, New York City, during a session of the Urban Workparty); Ron Austin (photos taken at the Teachers' Workshop, Madison, Wisconsin); Keith Alward (photo page 2 taken at the Teacher Center, Wilmette, Illinois, during a session of the Beginners' Workparty; page 235 taken at the Learning Center, St. Louis, during a session of the St. Louis Workparty); Alex Schwartz (photos taken at the Fordham/District 3 Learning Center during a session of the Urban Workparty); Betty Kellogg (photo taken at the Mountain View Center for Environmental Education, Boulder, Colorado).

My co-workers at the Exchange and Laboratory offered tireless and good-humored support. Copy editors for this book were Jeanne Lance, Barbara Piper, and Julia Cheever. Gretchen Thomas brought forth the original Workparty Proceedings and also assisted with editing, photos, and contributors' notes for this book. Robert Henry and Joan Kaluenja provided expert typing. Bret Rohmer designed the cover and selected photos, and Chet Tanaka assisted with book design. Jean Sims and Ken Harms guided its publication through the labyrinths of bureaucracy. Wilt Martin coordinated production. Donn Karstens amused us.

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# ABOUT THE TEACHERS' CENTERS EXCHANGE

Give-and-take about teachers' centers is the aim of a project we began in fall 1975 and call an "exchange." Here's what we are doing:

- Finding answers for educators' (and laymen's) questions about teachers' centers and similar forms of staff development: telling about program and policy in experienced centers, referring inquirers to center leaders, making matches among people whom we perceive to hold common purposes, feel similar needs.
- Spotlighting and circulating information, ideas, and themes: curriculum materials, reports, research and position papers from teachers' centers; writing descriptions of centers, articles, bibliographies. We will circulate information to those who have expressed a particular focus or problem.
- Arranging for meetings among teachers' centers people and those who wish to learn about, with and from them; facilitating visits to centers. We are also exploring the use of joint study projects, participation in institutes, and consultancies as ways to spread the word and practice of teachers' centers.

This work is supported by the Educational Policy and Organization Program of the National Institute of Education in order to strengthen the existing spontaneous information exchanges among locally initiated teachers' centers, and to extend their communications to other educators exploring alternative forms of inservice. We are less than a technical assistance agency, because the expertise about teachers' centers is dispersed around the national "network" of experienced centers. However, we are more than a clearinghouse, for we aim to extend the present network by putting people in personal touch with others of like premises, purposes, and problems. So, another purpose of our work is to investigate interactive networking as a means of disseminating education innovations—to find out whether an informal network can be stimulated, strengthened, and stretched, all the while retaining its qualities of voluntarism, mutuality, trust, and easy access to the dispersed centers of action.

Easy access and volunteered sharing in a network seem to depend on members holding some common beliefs and goals. So, while we're aware of many different structures and programs in teachers centers, our aim to gain (and **assess**) experience within an interactive network leads us to focus on that subgroup of well-developed and just-beginning centers that share common premises and purposes. A shared premise is:

**Teachers must be more than technicians, must continue to be learners. Long-lasting improvements in education will come through inservice programs that identify individual starting points for learning in each teacher; build on teachers' motivation to take more, not less, responsibility for curriculum and instruction decisions in the school and the classroom; and welcome teachers to participate in the design of professional development programs.**

And, amidst rich variation in programming, setting, style, and structure, we find common **purposes** among this network of centers:

- To **respond** to teachers' own definitions of their continuing learning needs with assistance and instruction that helps teachers enrich and activate the learning experience of the children in their own classrooms.
- To **provide an environment** where teachers may come to work on materials or projects for their classrooms, receive instruction individually and together, and teach and encourage each other.
- To **advise and assist** teachers in their schools, working in the spirit of finding the teachers' own starting points for improvement.

We want to reach others who share such premises and purposes for staff development and who would value interacting in a network. We invite your inquiries, and your news, opinions, and ideas. Our grist is not just the facts of life in teachers' centers (program, participation, decision making, finance) but also such issues as projecting differing goals for schooling, rearranging patterns of teacher preparation and certification, involving teachers in new curriculum development, helping teachers to influence curriculum and instruction decisions within school districts.

We will appreciate news of other teachers' centers and inservice and curriculum development networks, notices of meetings, conferences, publications, media, and other communications of interest to teachers' centers.

PHOTO BY ALEX SCHWARTZ

# WHAT OUR HEARTS REQUIRED: A RECOLLECTION OF BEGINNINGS

*Georgia Delano, Stanley Chu, and James Neujahr*

On April 28 and 29, 1978, the Workshop Center for Open Education at City College of New York celebrated the tenth anniversary of the beginning of its work, which originated as the Advisory Service to Open Corridors of the New York City school system. Following are edited excerpts from a panel discussion by former Workshop Center staff members Georgia Delano and Stanley Chu, and City College faculty member James Neujahr, on the Center's gradual and organic growth from the work of the Advisory Service to Open Corridors. As the Advisory Service's work expanded, Corridor teachers needed a place to continue their own development, and other teachers who had never worked with Corridor advisors but had become interested also needed a place that supported their fledgling efforts. A few passages from other meetings held during the celebration have been inserted into this transcript of the panel discussion. These inserts are noted by an asterisk that follows the speaker's name. The full proceedings of the Tenth Anniversary Conference will be published by the Workshop Center in a forthcoming bulletin entitled "Ten Years of Open Education: The Open Corridor Program and the Workshop Center."

**Arthur Tobier (Moderator):**

I came into relationship with the Workshop Center about ten years ago as a journalist, and I've been involved in the development and in an attempt to understand the development with the staff here since then. I've been asked to serve as a moderator for a kind of historical look at this development. We don't often have the opportunity to take a long look at an institution; we have a tendency to take things as given. But I think there is drama in the making of this Center, which has become an institution. I'd like to ask Georgia Delano first to talk to us about how the Workshop Center evolved out of the original idea.

**Georgia Delano:**

The first thing I want to say about our Center is that we had a Center before we had a space. When I first came to the Open Corridor program to help Lillian Weber with some of the administration, we had the equivalent of a center in any room that the advisors met in, at P.S. 75 or P.S. 84, during the weekly after-school session on Fridays, which lasted later and later and later, until 8 or 9 at night. Finally we made the decision that we had to get a whole day of work in which the advisors who worked in the Open Corridor schools could be together, have all kinds of experiences together, and arrange programs which could draw people who were part of the Open Corridor communities.

(Editor's note: Open Corridors is an innovative program to open up the curriculum and relationships in primary, multiracial classrooms in the Upper West Side and Harlem in New York City. Beginning in 1968, the program gradually developed clusters or communities of four, five, six, or more classrooms sharing the same hallway. Teachers participated on a voluntary basis. The members of each cluster were participating children and teachers on the corridor plus parents who wished to take part, the school principal and support staff, paraprofessionals, the custodian, student teachers, and teachers of teachers, known as "advisors," from City College of New York. Under Lillian Weber's leadership, the advisors went into the classrooms and assisted teachers in moving gradually from whole-class focus on a single lesson, to flexible groupings around learning activities that connected the learning of basic skills with experiences representing the children's own homes and neighborhood. In addition to help with activities conducted in the corridors and in classrooms, advisors would meet with Corridor teachers at lunch time and after school to develop curriculum materials that offered such connections. The meetings with advisors also helped break down isolation among teachers and enabled teachers to help one another.)

**Lillian Weber:***

We're talking about the building of communities, the possibility that the school could be a community that supports a teacher's best and most intelligent function—which is to support the development of children. To do this people had to get over the notion that teachers and children were adversaries. The major question that had to be set forth to teachers was, "Are you willing to look at your work? Does it meet your obligation to be the best support possible for children?" Reflections on teaching and the seriousness of teaching were the essence. Teachers had to be encouraged to make decisions about their work, not in the sense of "Do whatever you want to do," or "The children can do whatever they want to do," but in the sense of "How can the children and teachers be helped to their most fruitful function?" Open Corridor meant teachers were not behind a closed door by themselves but relating to each other. The Corridor was the pipeline of communication going on. Open Corridor meant taking the brave people who were willing to try something different and creating for them the support system they needed.

**Georgia Delano:**

Through some strict budgeting and the explanation of this need, we managed to save Fridays for all-day advisor sessions. We did all kinds of things in these Friday sessions. We had seminars on language. We had meetings with our principals. We had meetings with custodians in our schools. The teachers who helped initiate change needed workshops where they could further explore issues, and so we had meetings with Open Corridor teachers and paraprofessionals. We found we had to expand, and we moved to Greenwich, Connecticut, for weekend conferences with people from an Open Corridor community where we could do things that would make us a community of friends: swimming, singing, watching a film, reading, and then doing some serious work in a particular area that was important in the daily life in that school.

We found that when we moved the Open Corridor administrative office to City College, to the building down the street, Klapper Hall, that we had our Center there. There's a little kitchen, and sometimes we met there. There are classrooms, sometimes we met there. We learned to be a moving center. Advisors would come in with all kinds of materials from the schools, work the children had done, notes from seminars with Corridor teachers. We all came with paper bags full of things that we wanted to share with each other on that Friday when we worked seriously on a review of what had happened and on our plans for the future.

## BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

It became quite clear, though, that we were working toward meeting the need for a space, not only for the teachers already developing new classroom environments but also for the many teachers making beginning efforts on their own. Through some valiant efforts on the part of everybody, we moved from our original Ford Foundation funding for the Advisory Service into a ridiculously complicated search for funds from the federal government. By some amazing grace and the fact that we had a very generous and supporting chancellor of the New York City school system at the time, Harvey Scribner, we managed to get Title III funding, and with that and through City College President Robert Marshak's help, we got this space in Shepard Hall and converted it from a physics laboratory into what you now see.

Designing the space was also a community effort that was part of our centering. When we had thought about what we wanted, we looked at the space, took out some of the lab apparatus that was on the tables, and scrounged from every place that we could think of to find paints and materials. Everyone worked on the whole process: City College students, faculty, Open Corridor advisors, teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, principals. We have great pictures of one of our principals washing the windows. We had workshops that were real work days, which we would always end with a feast. And this was something that's been traditional in our Center: cooking and sharing the good things of life in food is one of the ways in which we have become a community. Was it you, Stan, who put on the kitchen section of the Workshop Center the quotation from Lin Yutang, "What is patriotism but the memory of the good things we ate when we were young?" And in our Center we have people of such marvelously varied backgrounds that I can tell you we've done some wonderful eating here.

After Title III (1972-1975), when we were funded really well for three years of work, we had to cut down on the finances for the Workshop Center. But the serious work of thinking deeply about what our mission was, about what our hearts required, made the cutting of funds possible without, I think, diminishing one iota of the strength and the power of this place. A great deal of volunteer effort goes into the Center now. All of the staff work way beyond what would be reasonable hours, and under Lillian Weber's incredible direction, the Center, I think, is really here to stay.

**Stanley Chu:**

When Celia Houghton and I first started working together in Greenwich in the summer of 1970 — before there was a Greenwich Teachers' Center — Celia asked me one July morning to stop in the Bronx and pick up someone named

Lillian Weber whom she had herself just recently met. So my wife Linda and I drove up to the Bronx—I didn't even quite know what the Bronx was—really to Riverdale and picked Lillian up. I remember driving up to Greenwich with Lillian in the back seat, and I don't think I said a word. Lillian commented about two years later, when I came to speak with her about working here, that she wondered if I was able to speak very much, if English was my native tongue.

That was the beginning of, or part of, a transition I had gone through and am still going through, and I want to reflect on that a little bit—the transition from a classroom teacher into an advisor of teachers. And also reflect on the kind of work that I've seen teachers participate in here, how that kind of work has evolved, and how teachers use this place.

First of all, I and all of us who have been on the staff of the Workshop Center came to the job with a number of years of classroom experience. Some of us had had advisory experience before as well. Just a few months ago a number of advisors and I were sitting around in this room, talking about the changes that we've gone through as advisors over the years. We remembered starting in advisory work as experienced teachers already, and coming to a teacher and pouring out a number of different ideas to that teacher, mainly based upon our own successful classroom experience. We realize now, reflecting back, that that was a beginning point in the continuum of the growth of an advisor.

An advisor grows into a position of seeing a broader perspective, gaining more of a willingness to begin with a teacher wherever he or she is—at that particular point. After working in an advisory position for a number of years, you can see the multitude of strategies that a teacher can use to get from one place to another, wherever the goal is that he or she defines. And it's something like what you learn after working with children over a number of years. You may think, as a beginning teacher, there is one strategy for getting the numbers added up right. But in fact, as you all know who have been working with children for a long time, there are many different ways—some more efficient than others, but a lot of different, usable ways. So as an experienced advisor, you develop a sense that teachers can also get from one place to another in a lot of different ways. But it's not so easy sometimes when working with adults to apply what we've learned about learning, because we advisors are also adults and we have expectations of ourselves, which we tend to transfer onto the teachers we're helping. Often we've had a fair amount of success doing what we're trying to help another teacher do. We tend to apply our standards for ourselves to them. I've seen growth in myself and other advisors who have come with a number of years of classroom experience. Over the years we have learned to look for and respect the teachers' expectations of themselves.

## BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

**Wilma Heckler:***

I think there exists in every school and every teacher a desire to do something different and good. Teachers in even the most sterile-appearing schools first need confirmation in their work, *then* ideas of what steps to take next and techniques of how to do what they want to do. There is no such thing as a school where teachers are not interested.

**Stanley Chu:**

Many teachers used to come to the Workshop Center years ago for a specific workshop. None of them quite knew what they were getting into. But they would make a big commitment by coming here, a long subway ride sometimes, spending a couple of hours in the afternoon after working with kids all day. They had seen something on the Workshop Center calendar; they would come for that two-hour workshop, whatever it was, and then get up and leave. That still goes on, but over the years teachers have used this place and this staff in an expanded number of ways. One way that has grown a great deal is the casual and informal use of this supportive environment. Teachers will come now with their own agenda of what they want. They come to *be* in a place, a surrounding, and with other people, other teachers and advisory staff, that are supportive in some way. Teaching can be a very isolated profession, ironically so, because often we're surrounded by other people all day: children and adults. But rarely do you get a collegial kind of support.

One of the things I've realized over the years, speaking very realistically and honestly, is that advisors really don't know that much more about curriculum or child development than experienced teachers do. But one of the things that we do bring to the situation is a bigger picture; we've seen a lot of different situations and strategies and we bring a feeling of support. In fact, the support we may give in information or supplies, or in places or things, or in how to use a piece of equipment or how this piece of equipment fits in with child development, may in fact be very little over the years. But it's the idea that we are here at the Workshop Center or we are there in the schools, that a teacher knows that he or she can go to a place to get friendly support. That feeling lets teachers go on by themselves in ways that they might not dare if they didn't realize that here, if they need us, there's some kind of back-up system.

**Luisa Fuentes:***

My affiliation with the Workshop Center was a very important step in my professional development. Whether it was on-site visits to my school or my visits to the Workshop Center, the advisory staff provided a tremendous support system for me. I learned from advisors the importance of developing channels of communication in a way that doesn't identify first of all what's wrong and weaknesses. People like that, teachers don't need in their classroom! Lillian finds the strengths in the person. "Really knowing what it is I want for children" is the common understanding we are all building together.

**Deborah Meier:***

After seven years of teaching and as many of taking courses, undergraduate and graduate, in departments and schools of education, I met Lillian Weber, and for the very first time, I encountered a person who gave teaching the intellectual stature it deserves. I began working with her, and I came to realize that one of the things advisors stand for is the respect for the process of teaching, and not separating *thinking* and classroom practice. Respect for classroom teaching permeates the Workshop Center. Being a classroom teacher is the greatest, most marvelous profession!

**Wilma Heckler:***

Mature teachers at the Workshop Center find out they still have questions and are searching for new connections. Once the teacher becomes a questioner, then teaching becomes allied with all those other professions that are investigative. Once you become a questioner, then you're on your way.

**Georgia Delano:**

What came to my mind when Stan was talking and bringing so many memories back to me was the importance we placed on sharing the ideas here at the Center and then putting them down on paper. We learned through our work with the Prospect School in Vermont how very important was documentation of children's classroom work. And we also learned through Arthur Tobier and Ruth Dropkin's work as editors of the publications of the Workshop Center that our thinking expressed in publications became the literature of the Center. Everyone who took part in Center life contributed to these publications. Office staff who handled the children who came in here from the neighborhood in a very open and beautiful way wrote about that relationship. Classroom teachers contributed. Principals contributed. Advisors contributed. Paraprofessionals contributed. Parents contributed, as well as staff of the Workshop Center. And that thinking crystallized in writing that was our very own literature and became a real extension of the Center work.

## BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

**James Neujahr:**

The connection that the Workshop Center has carved out with City College wasn't given. Although the rooms were here at the college and Lillian was on the faculty, the relationship with the college had to be developed over time. I'm on the faculty in the Department of Elementary Education, where many of us had not involved ourselves greatly with what was going on here. Lillian in her way would draw us closer and closer to the Center. What happened, in fact, was faculty growth toward the use of this place. As that was occurring a lot of new opportunities arose.

At present this Center has an integral relationship to what we do in the School of Education. Many of our classes meet here on a regular basis. It has a relationship in terms of regular courses being offered through the Workshop Center, so that people can come and take a sequence of workshops and put them together in such a way that they become a course. The relationship to the College goes quite a bit further. We have very extensive in-depth experiences that become part of a regular College program. These experiences take place during the Workshop Center's summer institutes—three weeks when people come and almost live in this place. Last summer we were here during that terrible heat wave. Commitments came at such a level that we even fired up the kiln on 100 degree days because work was here to be done. We would arrive at 8:30 or 9 in the morning, work straight through until 4 in the afternoon, and then try to push people out the door. Lunch hours didn't exist except as time for leaving off some work and eating and talking all the while about where that work was going. This very intensive kind of work has, over the years, become a basic part of one of our graduate programs, which is "The Child and the Individual Instruction Program."

We are working on extending the relationship still further by training leadership for new teachers' centers. We're beginning a post-masters' program for people who are specifically interested in becoming advisors in open classroom settings and people who are interested in taking on leadership positions in teachers' centers. So what we'll be doing is joining with the Administration and Supervision Program at the college and having a combined program in which the field experiences that are developed will be based here in the Workshop Ceter and, we hope, in other places too. We hope the outcome will be a proliferation of the kinds of training that have been going on through the Advisory Service to Open Corridors for the past ten years and here at the Workshop Center for the past seven.

**Stanley Chu:**

Right now I am—have been for the last two months—the new director of the Garden State Teacher Center, which serves all of Bergen County in New Jersey and is located within Ramapo College in Ramapo. It's new territory, new ground in ideas and materials; we are just starting off. Georgia mentioned that the Workshop Center was a mobile center before there was a place. And now I've been operating for the first month out of the trunk of my car as the teachers' center. We just moved into Ramapo College two weeks ago.

A strategy that many children use to learn with and that I carry with me in my new work is a history of success. As you know, some children may have had many failures, but given time and support to work through those, they can eventually succeed, whatever the task idea is. So with adults, if you can build up a history of success, you're much more willing to go out and try something and stumble for the first 50 times, because you carry that history of success with you, and the confidence that if you try and work hard enough, it will come out all right. Well, Lillian has given me that in the five years I've worked here, so I'm going across the river now to New Jersey. It's new territory out there, you know, east of Manhattan. . . .

**Arthur Tobier:**

West!

**Stanley Chu:**

West! Right. (That's why I get lost.) Mary Caroline Richards has a paragraph in *Centering* that has always struck me as apropos of beginning something new. She says:

> I have a finger exercise for originality which I sometimes use. Working with a piece of clay, handbuilding, I destroy every pleasing result, seeking the unrecognizable. For if it is new it will not look like something else: not like driftwood nor a Henry Moore perforated torso, not like a coral reef nor a Giacometti sculpture nor a Haniwa horse nor a madonna nor a "free-form," nor the new look in pottery in the sixties: It will look very odd indeed, if it is really new. Insecurity we need perhaps the most when we are inventing. It seems like our philosopher stone turning base materials into gold. The image we make in such an exercise will not be our goal, but in creating it we will have performed acts for the first time, and these will bring new structures and coordinations into our hands and into our visions (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1964), p. 28.

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO TSURUTA

# PHILOSOPHY IN THE ROUND: COMMITMENT, CONCEPT, COMMUNITY

*Amity Buxton*

## Introduction: Question and Answers

"What do you do?" "How do you do it?" "Why do you do it like that?" Visitors to TALC/Teacher Shelter* have been asking these questions for nine years, and our answers— or rather our being able to answer—is part of the reason we are still here despite the vicissitudes of a teachers' center's life. Each time we respond to these questions from newcomers, we soon find ourselves talking about the underlying philosophy of what we do. "Why do we arrange the space this way?—oh, to stimulate different ways of looking at the environment. We think learning places should be comfortable, attractive, and somewhat unconventional to promote natural curiosity and movitation," we'll respond. Or, "We organize mathematics curriculum materials by concepts to help teachers see that learning materials can be used to explore and understand concepts as well as to practice skills." Or, when visitors ask about what kind of teachers use the Center we explain, "We welcome all persons who come, and we help them articulate what they want or need. We believe that everyone has potential for change and learning and that it's our job to encourage their self-direction and to support their unique interests." And again, when visitors ask about credit for Center work, we explain that we have worked out a way for teachers to design their own courses for district or university credit, in keeping with our basic assumption that people learn best when they are working out answers to their own questions.

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*TALC refers to Teachers' Active Learning Center, the original name of the Center.

These answers and explanations derive from our philosophy about life, learning, human development, change, nature, and society. Our answers about the Center encompass several aspects of our basic point of view:

- It takes time for people to change and develop.
- People, teachers as well as students, learn new content by first working with it actively at the concrete, operational level. Interaction with other learners stimulates and supports learning.
- Learning and development proceed optimally in a neutral place separate from hierarchical or political concerns.
- A learning environment that is physically attractive, flexible, and informal encourages people to work freely as learners, inventors, investigators.
- Learning opportunities are available in life to all individuals.
- The individual makes the ultimate decision of whether and when to learn.
- Formal curriculum should offer substantive, challenging subject matter presented in an interdisciplinary, holistic way, with a variety of experiences and materials,
- Learning is enhanced when teachers work with the learners in a nonjudgmental relationship and uphold standards of excellence.

To those who share the point of view from which we derived these principles, TALC/Teacher Shelter explains itself. At first glance, the visitor can observe the range of opportunities for participatory and creative experiences, as well as books to study and mathematical/scientific apparatus with which to experiment. We expressly select a wide range of materials out of a belief in the importance of imagination as well as intellect, of experience as well as skill, of aesthetic as well as cognitive content, of reflection as well as invention. Thus, after a brief unguided tour, a professor from the University of Puget Sound immediately recognized our "holistic view of the world and curriculum." Another recent visitor, a British mathematician and curriculum developer, knew at once that the Center valued teachers' learning through the active learning mode. Similarly, a teachers' center staff person from Connecticut noted just from observation that "you follow an integrated, individualized approach to curriculum and learning."

Underlying this observable philosophy of the Center is our basic view of the world, which implies that human beings can improve their condition through free choice, group process, and individual growth. When we are asked or ask ourselves why we believe that a certain way of working with teachers or students is effective—or why we work in the Center ourselves—we come back repeatedly to a conviction that education, environment, and interaction are a means to engage the power of the individual to develop full potential, to improve society, and to improve the quality of life for everyone. This is the basic philosophy within which our Center was conceived, implemented, and developed.

Webster's definitions for both *philosophy* and *theory* explain best what we mean by our philosophy. Philosophy is "a system of motivating beliefs, concepts, and principles" as well as "a critical examination of the grounds for fundamental beliefs and an analysis of the basic concepts employed in the expression of such beliefs." Theory is "the body of generalizations and principles developed in association with practice in a field of activity . . . and forming its content as an intellectual discipline" (*Third New International Dictionary*). Our underlying philosophy includes these three meanings: a motivating idea, operating principles, and critical analysis of the fundamental beliefs and ideas. In this essay, "philosophy" will refer to the three meanings interchangeably, because ideas, beliefs, and practice are so intimately connected.

The philosophy underlying TALC/Teacher Shelter did not spring full-blown from the head of Zeus. We sensed it first intuitively out of our experience and optimism, as we worked with teachers and students in the late sixties in an off-campus teacher education center in which San Francisco State College helped Sausalito and San Francisco school districts desegregate. Later we recognized the British teachers' center idea as an appropriate vehicle for embodying our idea of effective inservice that enables teachers to change. In the fall of 1969, we had to engage in considerable thinking, talking, and testing to make our philosophy coherent to ourselves and communicable to others. The process of making it explicit was not easy and not infrequently painful. Exhausting, and exhilerating, however, the process was a powerful experience, especially since it involved a "philosophy in the round"—that is, a philosophy which was to be embodied in a visible form. What follows is my reminiscence of how we thought out and acted upon our philosophy.

## The Power of the Implicit Philosophy

While the process of working out an explicit philosophy is instructive, it may be less impressive to the reader than the actual effects the implicit philosophy has on teachers participating in the Center. From the first official teachers' center sessions held in spring 1970 at San Francisco State's off-campus setting—to this past year, our fourth year to be housed in the Oakland Unified School District—our learner-centered and developmental approach to staff/curriculum development has drawn an evermore varied cross section of users. The number now involved each year—1,800-2,000 participants coming from one to thirty-six times during the school year—include teachers who are young and old, traditional and non-traditional, directive and non-directive, secondary specialist and elementary generalist; teachers from large and small, public and private schools; teachers from all minorities; principals, custodians, clerks, resource teachers; as well as student teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, and community. Their coming and returning to the Center—some for the entire nine years of our existence—attest to the implicit power of the Center to serve the entire range of individual needs and levels of teachers. Our assistance helps them identify and plan curriculum for the entire range of individual needs of their students—academic, social, cognitive, affective, developmental.

Several of our participants have talked about the effect of the unspoken philosophy that is communicated through the practice of the Center. In a recent evaluation questionnaire, one wrote about the "automatic mechanism" by which she has learned to ask herself "Why?" about what she is doing in the classroom. "This has resulted in a better and less tense room." This teacher has not come often, and then only to talk with staff or attend the study group on children's thinking. Another teacher who came almost weekly, first for science workshops and then to develop classroom materials in mathematics, said that she has a hard time deciding which ideas she has are hers and which are ours. Other responses to the questionnaire reveal many kinds of effects on teachers:

- Using your materials helps me evaluate myself as well as the children. (fourth-grade teacher)
- The warm, giving atmosphere of Teacher Shelter allows me to relax, discuss problems, get a fresh point of view and renewed energy. (fifth-grade teacher on special assignment)
- Just seeing the variety of materials available is very stimulating and makes me want to create new projects. (consultant, seniors, and others)
- The Center staff taught me more about interdisciplinary learning than all the professors in all the courses I have taken for professional growth. (K-6 resource teacher)
- Children love to work with the material I made at the Shelter. They were anxious to go on to the next unit. I noticed an increase in their independence and confidence. (first-grade paraprofessional)

The Advisory Group teachers, who plan policy and program for the Shelter, believe that part of the strength of the philosophy is that it remains implicit for the participants. The actions and attitude of the staff, the atmosphere of the environment, and the experiences planned for participants "tell" the way we view the world and how we hope teachers will arrange their classrooms and teach their students. The Advisory Group views the monthly calendar as presenting in its entirety an interdisciplinary, multi-leveled curriculum. The format common to all workshops encompasses the entire scope of our view of developmental learning: grounding in theory, active experiential learning, classroom application, curriculum development, and the option to request follow-up advisory support in the classroom and to bring back children's work to the Shelter. Members of the Advisory Group know that every participant who enters will have his or her "entry point" tapped and supported. "You can't push teachers further than they want to go," another Advisory Group member explained. "What the Center accomplishes has something to do with readiness—teacher readiness. The Shelter allows a teacher to explore, to poke about, until he or she is ready to learn."

In 1973 the original Advisory Group had brainstormed what a center should be before they hired us as staff. Their philosophy was explicit: value the teacher as a professional who can identify his or her own needs and learn; value the center as a permanent, relaxing, stimulating place where teachers can get help to meet their own needs within a framework of solid curriculum content; value a staff responsive to teachers' suggestions, challenging but non-judgmental; insist on voluntary participation. Three years later, the Advisory Group added the notion of the teacher as a decision maker, a knowledgeable professional.

While the Shelter's participants probably sense the philosophy that the Advisory Group can put into words, they do not necessarily endorse it any more than a class of students espouses the philosophy of their teacher. Some people who know about our philosophy and haven't visited our Center mistakenly assume that the participants and staff form a clique, an elite group of philosophers and practitioners who follow a certain way of teaching. I wish they could join our visitors and witness the assortment of "teachers" who come in during a single day. Last Tuesday, for instance,

- A distraught kindergarten teacher stopped by for more glue to fix the carpet-scrap rug in her reading corner (she had made the rug at the Shelter).
- A secondary English teacher, "stuck" in the organization of his master's thesis, came for consultation help (by appointment).
- A principal came to pick up some plexiglass he had asked our recycle center to get for him in order to make see-through planters for a teacher's classroom.
- Five childcare teachers came to see what new industrial scrap the recycle center had collected, from which they might help children make Father's Day presents.
- All the K-6 instructional assistants from one school were brought by the cur-

riculum assistant to work with the Shelter on new ways to teach reading and language development.

- A group of preschool parents, organized by their children's teacher, worked with a staff person on readiness activities in mathematics and science using unstructured materials.
- After school, a group of K-8 teachers worked together with a district science consultant and Shelter staff in a math-science workshop on bridges; another group of K-12 teachers designed and made rugs out of carpet scraps for their classrooms.
- Two secondary teachers from San Francisco constructed "organizers" for easy access to their career education curriculum for special education students.
- An unidentified browser, busily taking notes, explored the active-learning centers.

All told, on any one of the three days a week when we are open, a visitor would probably see a miscellany of 150 teachers representing a variety of backgrounds, viewpoints, styles, interests, and needs. Each would have come voluntarily—

> for a scheduled workshop planned by the Advisory Group and staff after reflection on a formal needs-assessment questionnaire.
>
> for construction of classroom aids or furniture.
>
> for independent study of a curriculum or learning topic.
>
> for consultation with staff or a fellow teacher on a classroom problem.

More than a "hot line" for crisis help, the Shelter is perceived by teachers as a "furnace" for the ongoing energy of learning, curriculum development, and personal/professional integrity.

In sum, the philosophic basis of the Center is able to encompass the range of individual philosophies of the teachers who come. Regardless of viewpoint or motivation, teachers come by choice, feel welcome, find what they need, and sense that the Shelter is theirs. The common element unifying them is an interest in bringing something new into the classroom—an ideal, material, learning activity, attitude, or energy—and making contact with someone else to do so. Their common objective is to meet some felt need to improve their teaching method, diagnostic skills, classroom environment, curriculum organization, or learning activities—in order to help one or more of their students to learn more easily, understand concepts more thoroughly, speak, read, and write more effectively, or simply get along better with self and others.

## Making the Philosophy Explicit and Visible

In order for a center to function in this way, it is imperative that the staff members articulate for themselves the philosophy upon which the center is developed. With only an implicit idea, a staff may take up a particular theory or practice without realizing that it does not fit with what they really believe and value; they may even unwittingly adopt programs and materials that are actually antithetical to their basic views of children, learning, or change.

We made our philosophy explicit and visible as a center through three avenues: *personal commitment*, *explicit conceptualization*, and *community of action*. Through the person, the idea, and the community of co-workers, we created the Center in an ever-widening spiral of meaning.

When the idea of a teachers' center was first mentioned to us by a San Francisco teacher recently returned from England and joining our San Francisco State project staff, we were already working with preservice candidates and master teachers in K-8 grades in two desegregating districts—San Francisco and Sausalito, across the Golden Gate Bridge. We were committed to desegregation, to school-community relations, and to new learning materials in the manipulative/discovery/divergent thinking modes.

The course work and curriculum materials we used came from new theories about teaching and learning, including the "spiral curriculum" in social studies, "language experience" in reading and language, manipulative mathematics apparatus (like Cuisenaire rods, Dienes blocks, and geoboards), and Elementary School Science. The off-campus teacher education center, located in Sausalito, included a new kind of community-school relationship. We had community workers and local minority students. We offered these "New Careers" students special counseling and tutoring so that they could complete college and enter teacher-credentialing courses.

It was the curriculum materials and the necessary ways of working with them that prompted some of us to change our views of both students' and teachers' learning. In particular, we saw that the experience of working directly with concrete materials—structured or natural—helped (1) both teachers and students to understand the concepts involved, and (2) teachers to recognize the many ways by which all people learn. Through these materials, the teachers not only understood better the concepts they were to teach, but they also demonstrated considerable personal interest and enjoyment as they worked with curriculum such as geoboards, "Batteries and Bulbs," and Cuisenaire rods. Many teachers made changes in their classrooms so that they (or student teachers) could introduce these experiential materials to the students.

Thus the ground was ready for planting a teachers' center: a place where a teacher could become a learner again through working with materials and could become a curriculum-maker for his or her students. The ideas made such sense to us that we were unprepared for the challenges and criticisms that arose from within and outside the project. We were so committed to the idea, however, that we forged ahead with our plan to create a teachers' center in our project's new quarters in the inner-city redevelopment area of San Francisco.

### *Personal Commitment*

The impetus came from our personal commitment to the teachers' center idea, formed out of our personal philosophy—which in turn came from our experience in classrooms and working with teachers during the turbulent years of the late sixties. We were concentrating on helping teachers and student teachers incorporate these new curriculum materials and attendant teaching strategies—while the Black Panthers were openly criticizing "irrelevant" classroom practices in Sausalito; San Francisco State students were striking on campus on behalf of more equitable treatment of black students; and our project's student teachers were revolting against the project curriculum, influenced by the anti-establishment themes of the national SDS movement and local flower children in the Haight-Ashbury. Most of us who were forming the Center had come from a traditional approach to curriculum. Our task seemed to be to meld the two—the traditional and the innovative—into a framework that could provide the solid base for developing a teachers' center.

In large measure, our personal commitment came from our individually different backgrounds. Most of us had studied liberal arts or science as undergraduates, so that we brought special interests and skills in content areas rather than in methods. We also represented viewpoints from different age groups and cultures: Japan, Brazil, both coasts of the United States, the Midwest, and the South. The eight of us who worked to initiate the Center represented classroom teaching in preschool, elementary, junior high, and senior high. The conviction we shared in common was a deep respect for the individual, a disciplined focus on the possible, and a valuing of the variety of ways different human beings—adults and children—learn.

This aspect of philosophical development might be called the *identity/purpose* stage, when the persons involved make clear who they are, what they believe in, and to what purpose they are working. Because of the inward-looking nature of this stage, it can border on messianic zeal or isolated purism—both of which impressions we often created in those beginning years. On the other hand, our personal commitment to what we believed was best for children and teachers generated the psychic and physical energy necessary for us to make our belief come true. Without that shared commitment, we could not have withstood the criticism and disappointments.

### *Explicit Conceptualization*

The second stage of developing our philosophy saved us from the self-destruction that can result from sheer expenditure of energy. This stage was *reality/research/reflection*, during which we explicated our philosophy and delineated our concept of the Center. We were thrust into this stage by challenges from traditionalists in teacher education, curriculum development, and the public schools. Their questioning and pessimistic warnings that "teachers won't come" forced us to explain our reasons for believing in the potential of a teachers' center as more effective than inservice designed by universities or school administrators. Because our explanations succeeded in gaining support and contributions of time and space from these critics, we were encouraged to further articulate our reasons for having a center.

The further we reflected upon our reasons and attempted to put them into a coherent statement about a teachers' center, the more clearly we saw that we had a philosophic basis for our idea of a center. The three principles of learning that we articulated seemed to be constants. Principle one: There are inherent stages in all humans' development in which learning is facilitated by active engagement with the environment. Principle two: Human development proceeds both vertically and horizontally—rising to higher levels of sophistication and spreading to ever-widening areas of experience. Principle three: Teachers who experience at the adult level the concrete stages of development can construct engaging and appropriate learning environments, interdisciplinary curriculum, and active learning processes through which *all* their students can reach their fullest potential.

As we explored these principles, observed them working in our classrooms, and studied teachers' center work in England, we gradually wove the holistic view of education and curriculum that formed the core of the Center. Meanwhile we communicated with educators in England, argued over the terms we'd use to describe the Center, debated "would it work?" with our university and community colleagues, moved out desks, dreamed dreams, and slowly designed a comprehensive framework for the center-to-be. The more we examined our philosophy in order to explain what we were doing, the more we became aware of the potential of the philosophy for helping us develop more effective ways of working with teachers and of helping them work with students.

Without identification of the intellectual basis underlying our way of helping teachers and students learn, we might well have proceeded willy nilly from theory to theory in response to district crises or personal whimsy. Having articulated reasons behind what we were doing, we usually avoided contradictions in our practice, confusion in our messages to participants, and vacillation in setting short- and long-term goals.

When funding for the San Francisco State teacher education project ran out in 1971, our concept of the Center was fully articulated and the operation had been tested for one and one-half years. Although we had to pack our books, equipment, and furniture into the district warehouse and some of us took teaching jobs elsewhere, we knew that a center could work and would work again in the future, using our articulated concept as a guide. Like a fisherman's net, it had potential for more complex expansion and accommodation, but was complete in its essential pattern.

### *Community of Action*

The commitment and idea were essential but not enough to implement a functioning center. It took a community of persons acting together to make the philosophy visible. The *action/accommodation* stage took everybody's energy, time, work, tears, anger, laughter, and trust. This "rounding-out" of the philosophy was the most heady part of our history in two senses—hard thinking and high energizing. Knowing what we wanted to create and why, we as a group had to imagine what it would look like and how it would work—and then check it back against our philosophical criteria to see that it was right. As we look back now, we envy centers going through this stage because it is both creative and satisfying.

The group sense stemmed partly from the American predilection to work in voluntary groups, which De Tocqueville aptly identified in *Democracy in America*. But our collaborative action also depended upon our shared philosophy—the key to our mutual trust.

Our joint commitment to the concept of the Teachers' Active Learning Center provided us with the dynamo for action, without which we could never have implemented our concept. Each of us had successfully tried out the theories underlying the materials and curriculum we espoused. The next step was to put our individual insights together. Because we believed that teacher leadership in the classroom is the critical element for students' learning, we organized and presented curriculum and learning materials in order to stimulate teachers' perceptions and sensitivities to learning possibilities. We designed small, active-learning centers, for example, using natural and man-made materials, books, and tasks at several levels of difficulty. We made learning centers in several subject areas around a single theme, such as "roundness" or self-image.

Knowing that individuals learn in different ways, we planned a variety of materials, learning environments, teaching styles, and time lines from which the teacher could select the ones most appropriate to individual students' needs. We made spaces for discussing and doing (workshop areas), reflecting and sharing (lounge area), learning and studying (classroom area), and inventing and exploring (construction area and learning center). Knowing that learning takes place when the learner poses the problem and governs the solution, we designed ways for teachers to identify their individual needs, plan their own programs, and assess their work in terms of their goals. At the beginning of the year, qad all participants fill out a card on which to record their Center activities. We also designed a form for participants to state what they needed and what they could give to the Center (assistance, content, resources); and we provided an end-of-year assessment on which they checked, rated, and specified ways the Center had affected themselves, their students, their classroom and school.

Knowing that change occurs slowly, over time, and in the pragmatic context of the classroom, we designed an ongoing program of activities from which individual participants could select their own pattern of involvement and could request or give staff support in the Center or classroom. We offered curriculum materials and workshops representing every level of development—from sensory-motor to abstract, from a sand table to books, balances, microscopes, and free scrap materials. The environment contained both samples of excellent children's work and complex active-learning centers at an adult level for teachers.

The sense of community grew as we worked together, talked about our basic viewpoints, and shared our differences. It joined us together in the exhileration of taking giant steps, and in depression when our small steps were misunderstood.

In time, the community of the Center has expanded beyond staff members to include participants, through their growing sense of ownership, their helping and sharing with fellow teachers, and their decision making about their own professional development. As teachers return to the Center, work with the staff, fill out their record cards, and exchange ideas in workshops or impromptu discussions, they gradually find themselves helping newcomers, bringing in their friends, offering to help the staff on busy days. Some become members of the Advisory Group. Some bring children's work to brighten the Shelter or to illustrate the success of a curriculum activity they devised from a workshop. Others will rearrange a display to create a more aesthetic impression. "More in keeping with the overall Center approach," a teacher remarked (with slight surprise at us), while arranging a display of blocks and water among the plants. In short, the teachers bring the practical world of the classroom and their own personal commitments into the Center, in response to the philosophical understandings they sense and implicitly endorse.

The leader of the Center, the director, plays a key role in this communal action/accommodation stage. It is the leader who reminds the staff of the basic philosophy and long-range objectives so that the action stays focused on the commitment. Sometimes the leader prompts staff thinking by distributing a provocative essay or arranging a conversation with an outside educator or researcher. Frequently, this kind of reflection on principles occurs in staff meetings and during day-to-day decision making about program implementation. Often too, the leader must recast problems or crises caused by external pressures in the district into challenges to the flexibility and responsiveness of the basic philosophy. "How can a mandated faculty meeting held here fit our belief in the power of teachers' voluntary involvement?" Or, "Can we come up with an alternative to what they requested which will be consistent with our concept?"

As the Center grows so do the community, staff, and participants. To prevent atrophy from lack of continued nourishment at the cognitive and personal commitment levels, the leader must provide time for staff to reexamine the basic materials and concepts being offered and rearticulate the basic philosophy. It was from this kind of rethinking that we expanded the notion of a teacher as a learner and curriculum-maker to that of a researcher in the classroom as well. Thus the threefold "rounding-out" of the philosophy—commitment, concept, community—never ends.

Both commitment and community, however, dwindle without periodic reaffirmation of the basic beliefs and underlying philosophy of the Center. Annual openings, parties, revising concept statements for Center calendars and brochures, annual reports, and picture scrapbooks of Center activities—these celebrations and mementoes serve to reaffirm the philosophic basis of the Center.

## The Significance of "Why?"

Nine years later, we have more than a simple sense that a center is effective and workable. We have shown that it can work in a variety of settings and with a range of teachers. In each setting, our philosophical point of view was identifiable in our practice. For each teacher, the implicit philosophy served to fulfill a need. For staff, the articulation and continual rethinking of the philosophy helped us be consistent in the implementation of the idea, be clear in our communication, and be purposeful in our growth. Without clear principles, we might have gone on tangents and diverted our energy from the original impulse. With our concept clear in mind, we were able to plan and implement a responsive center program and to find both intellectual and personal satisfaction from the process.

The importance of having an explicit philosophical basis for a teachers' center assumes particular significance for the new Office of Education-funded centers in the United States. The conceptual framework underlying the center policy boards will determine what will happen for teachers and how the center will be perceived by the community. The underlying philosophy will be as strong as the thinking that develops it and the commitment of the staff who implement it. Having a majority of teachers on the policy board, for instance, will not necessarily mean that teachers' needs and interests will be central to center programs or that an individual teacher will be able to work comfortably as a beginning learner of a new skill, as a curriculum-maker, or as a classroom researcher. Having a strong, clear, philosophical basis for the center will enable the board, staff, and participants to develop a lasting personal commitment to shared goals and to coalesce as a community for implementing them. When requests come to the center from administrators and the community, a clearly enunciated philosophy will help the staff maintain a commitment to the idea that the participating teacher's voice must be central to policy making and to the program.

In centers that are newly formed without a background of thinking about education and human development, the quality of leadership will be the critical element as the centers begin to operate and the staffs begin to work with teachers and students. Will the leader be able to relate important day-to-day decisions to an underlying philosophy? Will there be an underlying philosophy?

The ability to answer "Why?" will determine both the significance and continuity of teachers' centers, new as well as old. A philosophical basis that answers "Why?" provides a constant source of positive power, much like a rergeable battery. It can sustain the staff when pressures mount, if they reflect upon it. It can reenergize the staff when they are exhausted—if they refafirm its value. Then, in turn, the center will be able to recharge the energies of its participants.

The philosophical basis provides a structure through which thinking about content, knowledge, and experience can become rigorous and purposeful. It doesn't mean that staff members present themselves as pedantic or self-righteous—but that exultant highs and depressed doldrums do not become the predominant mode of Center work.

Like litmus paper, a philosophical basis serves to evaluate the quality of the program. It helps the staff to decide what and when to compromise, what priorities to set on requests and tasks, and what and when to change and still maintain integrity. The philosophic view thereby helps the staff and in turn the participants to develop a detachment by which to make program decisions.

Even now, as I write about the philosophy of our Center and the important role it played in the development of the Center, its power is clearer than when I started this essay. Rethinking the philosophy, I understand better its effect upon the history of TALC/Teacher Shelter. Reviewing these roots and the growth of the idea of TALC/Teacher Shelter, I can more strongly affirm that both the personal conviction of the staff—and the Center itself—would have disappeared long ago had it not been for our joint determination to keep asking and answering "Why?"

PHOTO BY RUTH KREITZMAN

# STAFFING A TEACHERS' CENTER

*Christine San Jose*

## Purposes of a Teachers' Center

If an organization is to be staffed effectively, those responsible for selecting the staff must surely first of all have some perception of the basic purposes of the organization. Next they will ponder the manner in which they hope the organization will go about its business, since the way in which things get done is rarely separable from the net result.

Can we assume that most people faced with staffing a teachers' center do in fact have these perceptions? Obviously they have an idea of the characteristics that attracted them to *"centering."* The apparent opportunity for teachers' self-determination of their continuing education is probably the main one. Besides that, the connotations of unboring activity and of cooperation are of real help for the classroom. Further, many accounts of centers are redolent with commitment and caring, a sense of worth in the job and the people. There is little doubt that teachers' centers have attracted both as organizers and as participants a high proportion of professionals who are energetic, resourceful, self-reliant, resilient, collegial, sharing, unpompous, unjaded, and more, presenting an image with which very many of us would like to be associated. Whether these lively people created the centers we get to know about or the centers created the liveliness is another matter; the fact remains that we glimpse the set-ups and would like one of our own. Also the literature of inservice programs (e.g., the Rand Corporation's change agent studies and the writings of Gordon Lawrence) confirms our own experience and intuition that more comprehensive teacher participation results in more effective inservice. A teachers' center can be a viable vehicle for organizing this participation right within the schools.

Do these impressions add up to a rounded perception of the basic purposes of a center, and suggest a constructive approach to founding one? Perhaps not precisely enough to furnish practical guidelines. I suspect that many governing groups of prospective centers, faced with selecting a staff that will bring their center to life, find themselves guided by not very much more than a list of goals that somehow don't add up to the whole intent.

Obviously, purposes will very properly vary in many ways from one center to another. Further, not only do the selectors of a staff have to make up their own minds, they also have to be flexible—not only at the outset while they're balancing their demands against the supply of staff available, but also throughout, as their new venture finds its own shape. However, out of my own experience of directing a teachers' center and my observation of others, I have come to see three main, interrelated tasks that a center must tackle if it is to promote improvement in the schools. It is the centers whose staff are tackling these that are the lively, effective units we recognize as worth emulating. The three tasks, each of which I shall discuss in turn, together with its implications for staffing, are: first, improving instruction in the classroom; second, bringing people together to effect the improvement; and third, coping with the complexities of change in people and institutions that the focus on the classroom and cooperation entails.

## Improving Instruction in the Classroom

As we pursue improvement in the classroom, we shall frequently find that we have to look beyond, to school climate for example, or to support from the home, if lasting gains are to be made. But the starting point is the teacher on the job. Today teachers are demanding of those who supposedly have the mental and material resources to make it happen, "Help me be a better teacher, here where it counts, in the classroom." For once we hear what the teachers are saying, since it articulates with the taxpayers' demand for visible returns on their ever increasing outlay.

Interpreting this request, and meeting it, are the teachers' center's aim. Easily said, but consider that the center is required to listen to people who traditionally have not been listened to; who have hardly in fact spoken out; who indeed have received very little training in analyzing what their needs may be. It must then locate and assemble resources, perhaps from widespread sources, and organize them into attractive programs drawing teachers to the center.

This gives us our first clue to center staffing. Broadly, someone has to be close enough to the classroom to help interpret needs, while the range of available resource personnel has to be wide and varied. This suggests a small core of center staff, with most of the funds then available for contracting consultant help as needed. However fine a team of regular consultants might be assembled, they are unlikely to be capable of optimal response to all priorities at all times. Regular full-time salaries eat voraciously into funds, and it is by keeping them to a minimum that most successful centers have maintained their flexibility.

Having distinguished our two main groups, the core staff and the contracted consultants, we can now delineate both more finely.

### *Needs Discernment*

The prime task of the core staff is discernment of needs. Obviously, bringing about the fulfillment of those needs is very important, but is nonetheless secondary. In a small center, the same person will basically do both jobs. A larger center can operate as a clearinghouse for resources — building a rich file of effective consultants as well as stockpiling helpful materials, making the contacts and contracts — and generally offering both persons and goods as, when, and where needed, in the most appropriate combinations. But however extensive the operation, there can be no managerial shortcuts to effective discernment of needs. Whoever is responsible must learn which are the most perceptive voices to listen to in the bailiwick, and will enlist those people as extensions of the center's ever open eyes and ears. Some use can also be made of more formal needs assessment instruments, the various lists and procedures available. However, nothing can replace regular, relaxed personal contact for garnering insight into people's needs — especially for convincing people that their needs are important, and if articulated can probably be met.

When contact has been firmly established between center staff and users, it can to some extent be maintained by memo and telephone, provided these demonstrate center accessibility and prompt response; but the need for frequent face-to-face discussion never diminishes. In and out of classrooms and the teachers' rooms, participating in school faculty meetings, chatting in principals' offices and in district offices, keeping in touch with district administrative meetings, exchanging views with parents, sharing news with teachers' associations, sitting in on school board meetings when significant decisions are to be made, lending a hand in the curriculum resource center, making oneself at home on campus, touching base frequently with all members of the center governing board — it is out of exchanges such as these that the web of teachers' needs becomes clear. To those embarking on centering it may seem extravagant to budget so much time for what is primarily listening. To a busy center staff member, it can seem after a day of meetings that the hours have whizzed by with nothing to show for them, while the paperwork piles ever higher. But listening is the crux of the job. Centers whose finances or size or organizational pattern impose strict limits on the amount of personal contact that can be made would do well to stretch those limits and find ways around them as best they can, such as squeezing money from elsewhere or dividing up territory. Efficient cross-section sampling, or careful establishment of needs assessment sub-area by sub-area might be tried, but they are decidedly second best.

Although we are looking at assessment of needs whose fulfillment is intended to make a difference in the classroom, we are already including (as we knew from the beginning) the needs of more than teachers. Many people play a part in how effectively children learn, and all of them need to further their skills to this end. However, though different elements in the needs of these many people can be surmised, premature focusing on differences too easily leads to fragmentation. Therefore we shall make little reference here to distinctions frequently found in the theoretical literature between "individual needs" and "institutional needs," or to such categories of inservice as those currently termed "job-related," "job-embedded," "personally-related," and so on. I am not convinced that these categorizations are based on meaningful distinctions. In my experience these simplistic abstractions do not catch the shape of reality. I am convinced that the task of the center is first and foremost to look at the reality of classrooms and ponder on what can be done to enrich, develop, and improve what is going on. Those enjoined with this responsibility will very soon perceive that virtually every situation involves many people in complex relationships, people interacting both as professionals playing diverse roles and as persons. Effective help will take account of the situation in its totality and subtleties. With this approach, we shall perhaps the more readily achieve integration of personal and professional goals, for example, or of work for career advancement and work for improved performance on the job.

*Who Can Do It?* What sort of person is most likely to discern needs . . . and who has had this kind of prior experience? We are looking for qualities not normally sought in selecting staff for schools, and we seem to need various characteristics that are not necessarily found together. First, someone has to see a situation clearly, the roles played by people in that situation, and the people behind the roles. Second, he or she then has to perceive how the situation looks to the people in it. It is only with these two views in mind that, third, it is possible to help people to a further step along a path appropriate to them personally. Of course not all assessment of needs calls for creative sensitivity. Often enough, individuals, schools, districts, or whoever is concerned will have a good idea of what they want in order to further the improvement of instruction, and a center can work diligently to promote such self-assessment and expression of wants. But further, what distinguishes the operation of a good teachers' center is careful attention to not only obvious needs but also underlying needs, resulting in facilitation of a step forward in line with the growth of the individual or the institution, rather than imposing someone else's notion of what should be done. It's fairly easy to walk in and tell someone what to do. It's not too difficult to listen to a problem and say what you would do. To listen to people and then help them think through what is the next best step for them, that is an extraordinarily demanding way to work!

People with this blend of receptivity and problem-solving skills are not in great supply, but a teachers' center governing group would do well to persist in their search for one or more persons of this kind to be the heart of their operation, most especially if the center is just starting and must establish its character. As for what guise these persons will come in, I won't even hazard a guess. A high proportion of the most effective teachers' center leaders I have met, all of them notably receptive and creative, have had experience in various aspects of education, including a stint in the classroom, and in addition have had responsibility of a different kind, frequently outside education, for example in business, social work, television, or publishing. Many of the effective center leaders are women who have spent much time running a house and raising a family, often with experience in community work. Of course there are notable exceptions, and anyway just because one available group of persons has proved a rich source does not eliminate others with different experiences. In a small operation, where our receptive/creative paragon is running the show virtually single-handed, he or she will also have to be able to handle the tasks we shall be looking at later. But without the receptive/creative element as a foundation, the superstructure is in jeopardy.

Two points to bear in mind during the interview with a job seeker. First, the creativity we are looking for is not a barrage of bright ideas. Rather, it is a thoughtful, free-ranging exploration of possibilities and a search for the constructive match of a particular person with another particular person or study or action — the kind of imagination that goes out to understand from different points of view. Second, the kind of person to whom others will open up appears (at least) friendly, relaxed, genuine . . . but if the listening is to result in constructive action, then (as one soon becomes aware among effective teachers' center workers) beneath the heart of gold is a canny intelligence.

Different centers will have different emphases, looking for staff (who will be responsible for needs discernment) with a strong classroom background, or perhaps with a strong theoretical grasp. That is for them to decide. Different centers will probably peg the job at different levels, from classroom teacher through different administrative grades. No matter: as has been stated, the essential characteristics are found in people with widely varying experience. Besides, if they are really good at discerning needs, they will discern even their own, and make good their deficiencies. As for the "status" level at which potential center staff are found, that again varies enormously. I have known teachers not long out of college that I would rather trust with the job than some high-ranking school-district officers or professors of education, but I've also known principals and professors who would be splendid. Personally, I would look for someone interested approximately equally in practice and theory. Obviously, the actualities of the classroom cannot be underestimated, but assessment of what they add up to, and what the next step might be, is invaluably enriched by theoretical knowledge. I would also peg the job fairly high, because it is demanding and carries considerable responsibility. Some people maintain that credibility with teachers is impaired if center staff are employed at a different level, but I have never found this to be true; rather, that long-term credibility rests on ability, enhanced by an honest acknowledgment of limitations. Also, as we have seen, the needs of many people besides teachers are involved, and the person working in the center is going to need credibility in many different quarters.

Many of the existing successful centers have been extremely fortunate in their staffing. The challenge and freedom of these largely voluntary unorthodox ventures have attracted people of unusual ability who have not been interested in either the money or the rank involved. The type of person we have characterized as optimal teachers' center staff would make a success of many endeavors. As centers become more common, there may well be competition for leadership of this caliber. It's worth paying the money if that's what it takes to get these people. What may be more difficult to come up with in institutions is the latitude these people need to do their best work. It's worth rewriting the rules—indeed, it's difficult to see how centers can prosper if we are not prepared to rewrite the rules. Further, chances are high that people like this won't be satisfied unless they themselves are learning and growing as they work, so there's no point in being less than totally honest, or in persuading them against their will, if the circumstances of the job do not in fact provide for responsibility and growth.

The basic premise of this section has been that those responsible for a teachers' center need above all to find staff able to discern the *complexities* of what people need in order to improve instruction. Efforts at improvement without focus on the whole context are unlikely to be any more efficacious than the gimmicky bandaids or irrelevant methodologies that teachers' centers are being formed to replace.

Some centers may envisage their core staff as more dependent agents of a governing council, or more strongly directed by various committees. My experience and observation of teachers' centers convince me that casting the center director's role that way—as mere coordinator of committees' explorations and decisions—will result in impotence. More progress is made with the services of someone prepared to make the most of his or her unique and comparatively independent position, take initiative, and accept responsibility—listening, seeking feedback, emending, genuinely making use of democratic machinery, yes—but also contributing much of his or her own.

### *Program Design*

As the discernment of teachers' needs is infinitely more complex than administering a ready-made instrument, so the drawing up of plans to fulfill needs is infinitely more than delivery of training. By keeping what is actually happening in the schools ever in focus, and by recognizing always the diversity of people to be served, the patterns okvgram development begin to emerge.

What kind of person is needed to organize a center's program of instruction? Putting the program together will call for firsthand knowledge of resources available in the district—especially among teachers—and in the community, and ingenuity in using these resources. The general shape of the center's offerings is set during the needs assessment—by teachers' and others' requests and the center staff's interpretation of user needs. In a small center, the director or coordinator can delegate much of the actual organization (securing the instructors, fixing dates, informing interested parties, and other tasks) to a well-organized assistant, such as a secretary, intern, or graduate student. In a larger center, the subject area coordinators, the advisors who go out from the center into the schools, or other staff, whatever their function, can explain teachers' needs to a program organizer.

Program organizers are in the business of developing people's potential. They need to be able to spot potential, encourage and support it, and help people to enlarge their knowledge and skills and hone the ability to share them. The organizers must be willing to trust other center staff and users with responsibility. How the center's program functions is just as important as what it consists of. The *how* is what primarily conveys the center's message of response to needs; the center's attitude toward the worth of participants; its trust in their abilities; and its commitment to the profession of teaching.

A large number of participants in a program is not always the most crucial indicator of success. Center staff must keep an eye out for the people who will use the information and skills they learn—in the classroom, with their colleagues, to create a ripple throughout their schools. Leaders must then be open to constructive feedback from their core participants—the organizers can't be in love with their own programming.

Another desirable quality in center leaders is the ability to formulate a conceptual framework for the process of teaching. This may very well take the form of putting what goes on in the classroom at the heart of teachers' learning, and seeing how characteristics of teacher training, teacher style, pupil background, school climate, and other factors influence what goes on in the classroom. The ability to conceptualize teachers' learning provides a context for efforts at improvement; it helps discernment of underlying causes and effects; and it helps build concerted development, rather than devotion to one aspect of schooling and neglect of others, or scattering of refinements here and there.

To ensure the continuing effectiveness of the teachers' center program, core staff should possess ability in two other main areas: one is communication and the other is designing, provisioning, and operating a curriculum resource area.

Communication, meaning constant personal contact, bringing people together, listening and talking as frankly as possible, we have already seen as vital to center operations. Equally vital are the center's written communications: memos, newsletters, flyers, notices of meetings, minutes of meetings, thank-you notes, idea sheets for teachers, calendars, schedules, internal and external reports, pictures in the local papers. Communications with the wider professional world, such as teachers presenting their action research at subject-area conferences, or staff comparing experiences with other centers and helping new centers on the way, are a source of stimulation, fresh ideas, counsel, and camaraderie.

The extent and content of the center's curriculum materials resource area and workplace for teachers will be determined in large part by the needs discernment process. But in advance of that the staff should stimulate teachers' requests by projecting some possibilities that teachers may not have imagined: a library of professional books and published curriculum materials, to be sure; audiovisual materials if these are not readily available elsewhere; raw materials, many of them scrounged, with which teachers can make lesson materials or classroom equipment; science and math materials devised from the natural environs, and social studies and language development ideas taken from the surrounding community; exemplary children's work that teachers bring in to share with their colleagues, along with lessons and learning activities teachers have devised. Talents for arranging space invitingly, for organizing diverse materials and managing the use of equipment—ingenious and tidy housekeeping traits—are indispensable in the staff of a center that decides to offer teachers a workplace and resource depot. In these invitingly relaxing spaces and admidst purposeful and stimulating activities, the staff in informal conversations with teachers will uncover their most deeply felt needs and provide counsel and opportunities for problem solving and sharing.

*Research.* Besides needs discernment, communication, and resource management, the core staff should possess some ability to do research. Much research in education has until now proved unsatisfactory both as pure and as applied study. Even within the usually minute fragments selected as the field of study, often enough wrenched out of context, the innate complexities of the fragment itself are commonly disregarded in the interest of methodological procedure. The net result is that teachers do not value either the data per se or understand the possible application of many of the findings. If their questions are to be significant and their data sufficient, researchers need the practitioners; if practitioners are to move forward intelligently, they need the answers to questions that the researchers can help them refine and then explore. It seems to me that teachers' centers, by bringing together diverse people to focus on the teaching-learning process, could well furnish ideal circumstances for the growth of significant research. Centers that assume responsibility for long-term instructional improvement should certainly budget for research. Large centers would do well to assign a core staff member with at least half-time responsibility to carry out research with teachers, interpret findings, and help school people acquire research skills. In a smaller center, unable to afford this regular outlay, research might be contracted in the different areas as appropriate at different times; but to ensure pertinence and development, a core staff member should have ongoing responsibility, working continually with field practitioners as colleagues. It is not enough to decide periodically that a research effort is due, and call in the experts to do their thing. The research has to be an integral part of professional growth in practice.

All of these jobs, then, have to be accomplished by the core staff of a teachers' center. For most of the work, the selectors of staff will obviously be on the lookout for the intelligence, practical experience, initiative, flexibility, organization, spoken and written effectiveness, and so on that are the desirable basics for almost any job in education. A special skill they may choose to look for as they build their team is some interest in and familiarity with research. But above all, the center needs staff who understand people and situations in their infinite and shifting complexities. If any of the staff have special content area knowledge and experience, so much the better, and they will likely have plenty of opportunities to keep their hands in; but essentially they will spend their time facilitating the growth, and circulating the skills and wisdom of others.

*Job Descriptions.* The governing council might wish to draw up job descriptions for the different core staff; but since they are looking for rather special people, they would do well to keep the descriptions flexible, to make sure that they can use the unique talents of available people that they would like to employ, especially if they are building a team.

Additionally, some thought might be given to how long the selectors would like a core staff member to stay on the job. It appears to take at least three years for a center to establish itself, so a beginning center should look for some stability during that time. More than that is probably unreasonable to hope for. To a beginning center, the most attractive candidates will probably be those people who enjoy a challenge. If the center still has a lot of new ground to conquer after three years, they may well stay; but if not, the more competently they have done their job and have established the center as it is likely to remain, the more likely they are to move on to other things.

All in all, a center governing council will doubtless recognize that the success of their endeavor depends to a very large extent on the efficacy of their core staff. They need very good people—and very good people exist, but they take some finding and keeping. Once these people have been found, a wise governing council will take care to provide them with efficient and amiable secretarial help which will free them to use their talents, and will contribute to the center's hospitable ambience.

*Contracted Consultants.* So much for the core staff. Among the staff who will be contracted for as appropriate to help meet needs, many will be teachers. They will frequently need time and perhaps help to develop what they have to offer—moral support, encouragement, not to say arm-twisting! It is extraordinary how many fine teachers, often known and respected throughout their school system, will nevertheless be reluctant to make a presentation to any kind of group—not so much through stage fright, but because they don't realize how much they have to offer, and how helpful it will be to others. Fortunately, once the precedent has been established, it is enthusiastically followed.

Other contracted consultants may be widely recognized leaders in their areas of specialization, but they too may have to develop new approaches in the rather different circumstances engendered by teachers' active participation and increasing awareness of what their needs really are. Not, let it be noted, that the changes will necessarily entail a move towards the more practical. It is a mistake to suppose that, given more determination in their own education, teachers will call for more practical courses and eschew the theoretical, or that leaders of courses, workshops, discussion groups, working groups, and so on have to gain credibility through bettering classroom performance, or at least indicating direct classroom applicability of what they are teaching. Of course teachers enjoy a new idea that they can use tomorrow; but much more they appreciate a new understanding that gives them a firm foundation to work from, and helps them generate a wealth of their own new ideas. If a course purports to be of practical help and then it isn't, naturally there will be complaints that it needed to be more practical. This applies to most method courses, which may tend to come dressed up with generalizations and abstractions, but are fundamentally "how-to's." If a course deals with fundamental principles and speculations, or takes these as its starting point, it will be appreciated by many practitioners. Further, the quality of work from students who are there because they really want to learn is high. Also, learners in a teachers' center are made more articulate than most graduate students by the center's climate of acknowledgment of the importance of their job and of them.

In short, an instructor or discussion leader who does not relish bright, committed, expressive learners had better not get caught up in center work. The people we found ourselves wanting back time after time were not the entertainers, the easygoing, the ones with the gimmicks and fads, but those who respected both their subject and our teacher participants and so made demands. The best instructors manage to squeeze time out of their busy schedules, because they are attracted and stimulated by the challenge of the center.

## Bringing People Together to Effect Improvement

Teachers' centers that flourish are the meeting point of many different interests, wherein lies their strength. They interweave giving and taking, learning and teaching, with people often doing both at the same time as they work together. This collaborative aspect has been very important in the development of the teachers' center concept. Indeed the basic reason for centers has been to bring people together in a notoriously atomized profession, and to offer to teachers the support of parents and other citizens concerned about schooling.

Volunteers working in the center can immeasurably spread the staff resources. Teacher participants in the center form the first rank of potential volunteers. Other good people can be recruited from the community—they may be teens, parents, senior citizens, and they range equally wide in other characteristics. Some centers maintain that they would be unable to function without help of this kind. These people generate a reassuring sense of "*our* center," and are often invaluable links within the center and to the community beyond, both contributing funds of information and disseminating it. Volunteer help is very fitting—people attracted by the center's lively gathering together of people who want to make a difference, and themselves in turn forwarding this image and reality. For all this, however, care must be taken that center operations never are, nor appear to be, less than thoroughly professional. Teachers' centers are unlikely to fulfill their potential unless they purvey more innovation, intuition, and individuality in personnel and procedures than are presently common in schools; they will therefore have to be especially certain that their foundations are sound and perceived as such.

The bringing together of quite different approaches and philosophies is especially stimulating: teachers of different schools and grade levels and specialities; teachers and parents; teachers and administrators; teachers and professors. Discovering the many similarities among colleagues and enjoying the solidarity are enormously cheering; but exploring the distinctions, committing oneself to frank exchange, learning to live with plurality—this is the great step forward, for oneself as a professional and surely for the schools.

### *Recognizing Diverse Expectations*

For years the schools have been handed their rather grandiose charges by society, and administrators have put up a good show of undertaking them, while by and large it has been left to teachers to shoulder the responsibilities. The schools have been such a pool of not only huge, but diverse expectations, that perhaps they could never have functioned as well as they have if their real capabilities had been brought out into the open and debated. But today, societal values and societal demands upon the schools are in great flux and can no longer be taken for granted. Even more exacerbating to the jaundiced taxpayers are the soaring costs of schooling and what appear to be declines in student achievement. Schools will be subjected to increasing public scrutiny; "back to the basics" may well be only the first of a succession of demands. Surely then, it makes sense for those of us in education to get in touch with each other, to enter jointly in the discoveries and assessments of needs, to inform the public about the contradictions, complexities, and imponderables teachers face, and to gain citizens' understanding of how we are working towards improvement.

A teachers' center governing council committed to a collaborative approach will need center staff likewise committed. There are times when behavior that a staff member would do well to evince in order to obtain desired results will not necessarily reflect his or her true feelings. For instance, it is frequently constructive to appear relaxed, unhurried, and optimistic, thus inviting the sharing of hopes and anxieties, when in fact one is feeling uncomfortably hassled, rushed, and down. But the core staff's appearance of inviting and coordinating joint effort must go root deep. "Interpersonal skills" are not unimportant, but they are useless without the basic commitment. If the basic commitment is there—the will to understand differences and face them and live with them, the realization that confrontation as an attitude is more often than not a myopic indulgence—then the selectors do not need to look for polish on the interpersonal skills. Sincerity outweighs a great deal of charm.

## Coping with Change

School systems have not traditionally focused on the classroom, following up with active attention to school climate, nor have the people within them traditionally worked closely together. It therefore becomes apparent that if teachers' centers are to achieve their goals, then their participants (these being seen both as people and as institutions) have to go about their work in ways quite different from those to which they have been accustomed. But in the past we have seen school systems resistant to change. The cynical might therefore assume that centers, like previous attempts at educational innovation, may well be successful among a limited number of people, for a limited period, but over a widespread range and time, will go the way of their predecessors.

Centers so far—certainly the centers we hear about, because they have predominantly good news to share—have been largely voluntary. Many people have contributed a great deal of time, energy, and expectation to joint efforts which they believe in. Many of the centers lead a chronically precarious life financially, and survive only if they have many returns to show for the expenditure. All of them, to my knowledge, flourish because of the outstanding contributions made by people who are motivated by the opportunity to attain not money or promotion or prestige, but rather an approach to teaching and learning they believe in. As was pointed out earlier, centers tend to have attracted lively, capable people who want to keep on growing in their profession. Those who initiate and staff centers in the first place are people of vision; those who then come to give and to take within this framework are very often those who are already good at what they are doing, but who have the perception, dedication, flexibility, self-confidence, and energy to want to improve, and improve schools. Realistically we have to question whether there is a limit in our profession to the number of people who (1) wish to take up a continuing challenge, and (2) will bring considerable capabilities to the task, because they (3) believe that by cooperative focus on the classroom with teachers, what goes on in schools can be improved, and (4) see a teachers' center as a particular way to achieve improvement. Looking back on some previous movements we can see that we should never have expected them to be other than selectively effective. Maybe the same is true of teachers' centers. Certainly if people form organizational structures that they call "Teacher Centers" because that is a way of getting either funds or commendation for their supposed innovation or possibly some form of power, and have no real understanding of, and commitment to, the complex challenge of cooperative work towards improvement of what is actually going on in schools, these centers are not likely to survive, or if they do they are unlikely to prove effective.

However this may be, looking at how successful centers function, and bearing in mind what we know about institutional change (as found for example in the writings of Matthew Miles about "organizational health"), it is possible to discern general characteristics of operation that nourish efforts at improvement. Securing and supporting staff who could generate this climate would set a center well on the way to success. In order to cope with change, then, centers need staff who will develop:

- communication among participants; maintaining a constant flow of information and opinion across levels and up and down hierarchies of authority;
- frank discussion of goals, and working out how to live with each other's goals, thus frequently promoting each other's goals symbiotically;
- people's promoting and accepting responsibility for self and own improvement; collaborative self-determination, not the giving and taking of orders;
- maximization of what everyone has to offer — both moral and practical support to this end;
- cohesion of effort;
- high morale, and actions that justify it;
- new ways of meeting needs and challenges;
- maintenance of the center's basic philosophy and integrity;
- constant openness to change and adaptations that may be called for;
- facing of problems, and cooperative problem solving.

In other words, successful centers work to forward those characteristics which we know to be essential to the health of an institution, and thus to its capacity for change.

## A Final Note

To sum up, then, a teachers' center governing council needs to select core staff who can bring together a wide range of people to focus on improving what is actually happening in schools. As the staff works they will have to create a setting and activities in which school people dare to change. Such leaders are not easy to find, but they do exist, sometimes with unlikely backgrounds. They are worth searching for, are indeed essential to the effectiveness of a center. Once found, they will need a good deal of latitude if they are to do their best work. Provided the governing council has spent some time discussing the center's goals, they should be able to assess the suitability of a candidate best from an all-council interview. Intelligence, experience in schools, imagination, organization, and commitment are to be desired, and the team needs someone with research ability of some kind, but above all the center requires someone who can listen to others and make them feel their needs are important, while also taking stock of the complex situation and devising diverse ways of meeting individual needs. (To candidates I would say, out of a collegial interest in their survival: do not even apply for the job unless you can rely on your sense of humor and your digestion!)

In conclusion, may I draw together what I find after four years experience to be my strongest convictions about centering. Both those faced with the staffing of a center and those considering becoming staff might care to match these against their own professional precepts, and note as they do the implications for the kind of program and the kind of climate they would like to establish as their joint endeavor, and therefore the kind of people they would like to see running it.

- There are the needs of many different people to be met, and each person has many needs—cognitive, affective, social. Some of the most important needs are psychological, obscure, and difficult to discern; these can cause fundamental problems in center operations if neglected, and tremendous gains if met.
- Both short-term and long-term needs are to be answered, but the latter are the foundation of continuing development, fitting into the general direction that the participants want to go.
- For all the plurality of needs to be met, for all the tremendous flexibility and variety in ways of meeting them, there will be some essentials of your program on which no compromise will be possible: quality of staff and participant commitment, and working through cooperation and consensus.
- Centers are a good way of giving recognition to and making the most of, the fine people—by having them share and by presenting them with new challenges. It's nice to be able to work out extra rewards for them also.

- However, there's sometimes a temptation to be elitist—you get beautiful results working with the people who are pretty good already and come to the center for help in getting even better. But eventually you have to try to reach those who may not be doing too good a job, and perhaps aren't even aware of it.
- The greatest need of some people—many people—in our profession is to give. Do everything you can to make room for their contributions.

## Editor's Notes

[1] This article is available separately as Teachers' Centers Exchange Occasional Paper No. 4, "Staffing a Teachers' Center" by Christine San Jose, available from the Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1855 Folsom Street, San Francisco, California 94103.

[2] Recent research on the differences between the right and left hemispheres of the brain has been applied to the study of effective planners and managers by Henry Mintzberg in a provocative article entitled "Planning on the Left Side and Managing on the Right," which appeared in the July-August 1976 issue of the *Harvard Business Review*. The article emphasizes that planning and managing require quite different talents and that effective managers are characterized by "relational," "holistic," "intuitive" mental processes rather than by ordered and sequential thought.

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PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO TSURUTA

# FINDING OUT WHAT TEACHERS NEED

*Lorraine Keeney**

How is what teachers learn in the teachers' center transformed into what children learn in the classroom? Put the other way around, how do you translate what children need to learn in the classroom into the curriculum that teachers will want to develop in the teachers' center? If one curriculum were to be taught to everyone, then the decision about what teachers should learn in the teachers' center would be quite a simple process of diagnosing, from looking at achievement test scores, what skills students lack, and teaching teachers how to "deliver" those skills. This is the state of affairs in much of the current advice on assessing the instructional needs to be addressed by an inservice program. However, experienced teachers' centers have learned that finding out what will attract and benefit teachers is not simply a mechanical procedure. Uncovering needs, deficiencies, frustrations, and enthusiasms of a "critical mass" of teachers is a complex process, time-consuming and never-ending. But it need not be a perplexing task. And the less mechanical the process is, the more authentic the needs assessment will be.

A needs assessment may be informal, usually through person-to-person conversations, or formal, using statistical analysis of systematically gathered data. In-person inquiries have the advantage of building closer relationships between staff and participants of the center. Personal assessments take greater account of teachers' feelings and increase participants' sense of involvement. However, personal needs assessments are more difficult to record and more subjective, and they cannot be anonymous. And unless the interviews represent a carefully selected sample of the whole population to be served, they may not show the whole picture of teachers' needs.

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*As a member of the staff of the Teachers' Centers Exchange, Lorraine Keeney has gathered advice from experienced centers about ways of relating program in the teachers' center to teachers' daily challenges in the classroom. This article derives from Keeney's talks with leaders of centers—individually and at the Exchange's several Workparties—and deals with both initial and ongoing needs assessment.

Formal questionnaires have the potential to reach a mass audience speedily. However, returns can't be guaranteed, and a form to fill in seldom taps teachers' deeper concerns or reveals emotional needs—for companionship, support, sharing—that a true teachers' center must attend to. Questionnaires may be costly in time and money to compose, send out, collect, tabulate, and analyze, and the information may soon be outdated. Computerized questionnaires make it possible to handle large amounts of data speedily. However, teachers' centers leaders who have tried to do needs assessment by collecting data on mass-scale, sometimes computerized questionnaires, are not enthusiastic.

> These types of questionnaires tend to generate more heat than light. There is hostility on the part of teachers in having to sit down and fill them out. We found that we were getting reports on needs that were not *real* needs.
>
> Our computerized needs assessment looked impressive, but as far as knowing what was going on inside, we didn't. Through interviews we have a far better idea of what teachers want.
>
> In our district, teachers have negative feelings about central-office-initiated surveys and subsequent district inservice programs. Once again the district is sending out their formal survey instrument. The teachers' center board feels that a survey from the center at this time would not sit well with teachers.[1]

Why do such computerized assessments not "sit well" with teachers? There are several reasons:

1. They are impersonal and seem antithetical to a center's attempt to convey concern about the teacher as a person with value as well as need. The mechanical survey seems incongruous for an organization that intends to commit teachers to their own learning and to sharing resources and abilities with colleagues.
2. Teachers do not fill out such forms very conscientiously, and they tend to discredit results of such surveys because their past experience of completing innumerable official forms has not often resulted in inservice programs relevant to the daily demands and problems in their classrooms. Although a computer printout of a survey gives off the golden gleam of hard data, it may not be reliable or valid.
3. In the hands of all but the most wizardly programmers, the computer survey is a blunt instrument. Far from evoking individuality, nuance, idiosyn-

cracy — qualities a teachers' center most wants to discover about its potential clients — the computerized survey usually cannot even yield simple vital details. At best, the printout provides a sketch of general needs within a school or district — most likely the same kind of sketch that experienced, thoughtful administrators and teachers are already carrying in their heads. The results may show, for example, that teachers have checked metrics as an area of concern. The printout tells nothing, however, about the level of expertise individual teachers already possess, the particular teaching styles they now use in their classrooms, the achievement levels and learning characteristics of their students, nor the manner in which the teachers best accommodate new information, techniques, and experiences.

What are the alternatives? Experienced teachers' centers have used short, hand-tallied questionnaires, interviews of individual teachers by center staff and teacher participants, group interviews, informal conversations, feedback questionnaires and sessions after workshops, staff visits to classrooms, telephone interviews, and combinations of all of these. Many long-experienced centers have operated successfully without organizing such probes into a more formal needs assessment procedure. However, the current greater visibility of teachers' centers and the emphasis placed on serving hard-to-reach as well as highly motivated teachers, results in pressure on centers to be more explicit and organized about the ways they decide what programs to offer.

## Planning an Organized Needs Assessment

Whether formal or informal, your design for finding out what center participants and the teachers in your service area need must be well organized. Start by asking questions of yourself. Most of the following questions were suggested by teachers' center leaders who attended the June 1977 Teachers' Centers Exchange Workparty at the Learning Center in St. Louis.

1. What is the purpose in doing a needs assessment? Providing information for opening a center is very different from assessing needs of teachers already involved in center activities.
2. Are you trying to identify needs of individual teachers from far and wide? Comprehensive needs of a whole school faculty? Needs in a limited geographic or curriculum area? How many people can your staff serve?
3. Does some useful information already exist? What can you learn from records, evaluations, and veterans (both designers and participants) of prior or existing inservice work in your district?
4. Are you seeking a constituency broader than teachers? Do you want to

serve principals, parents, aides, school volunteers, bus drivers, secretaries, custodians, counselors, students, neighbors of the center? How will you find out their interests and concerns?

5. Are there people in the district or the community whose help you can ask for who have designed other surveys?

6. What are your resources for distributing or conducting your needs assessment and for tabulating and analyzing it? Make sure that the people who design the needs assessment are thoroughly involved with the people who do program planning—it's best if they are the same people.

7. Will the center complement and augment other staff development programs in the district? What are the administration's expectations for the center? How will you blend those with teachers' requests? Is the center responsible for some specific "changes," understanding, or mainstreaming? The relationship of the teachers' center to the district's inservice program and staff development goals must be carefully worked out.

8. Who are the teachers that are more likely to respond quickly and with enthusiasm and thus help give the center a reputation as a worthwhile resource? Who are the teachers who most need but resist professional improvement? You may need different sets of questions for these two groups. You must find ways to reach the second group and to reinforce and provide stimulating programming for the first group.

## Surveying by Questionnaires

A questionnaire does not have to be officious or boring. It should convey an accurate and attractive impression of the center, or the center you have in mind. Don't confront your respondents with an absolute blank—which they must fill in—as their concept of a center. Give them an idea or image to react to. Questions with limited choice answers (select a, b, or c) not only leave you with thin information, they present a different impression of the center from questions such as, "What should the center do to help you feel more competent and satisfied about your teaching performance?" A questionnaire that asks, in effect, "What are your deficiencies as a teacher?" implies a very different place from one that asks, "What talents do you have to share with other teachers? What problems have you identified for yourself? What is your growing edge? What intrigues you?" But don't ask questions in a way that suggests you'll tackle problems outside your purview or be able to respond to every need or suggestion.

Illustrations 1 and 2 at the end of this article are portions of questionnaires from the Teacher Curriculum Work Center in Chicago and The Teaching

Learning Center of the San Diego County (California) Department of Education. The questions suggest the character of the centers while eliciting respondents' needs and ideas.

If you decide to depend on questionnaire results for the design of your program, you should arrange to have your questionnaires personally handed out and retrieved by a building representative in each school or by policy board members, school staff, or volunteers. Distribution by mail alone (school mail or Postal Service) seldom brings a satisfactory return. You may also be able to increase your return rate by including questions about local issues—back-to-basics thrust, teacher transfer policy, curriculum decisions, parent involvement, changing roles for teachers, teacher relationships with administration—and how the center might help resolve these. You may be able to combine a needs assessment with a pitch for the center and an invitation to participate by handing out your questionnaire at school faculty meetings or department or subject area meetings. The needs expressed by the teachers on the questionnaire and in discussion can be the nucleus of ideas used by a planning team representing the group, which can then work with the center staff to develop programs.

If school district administrators are willing to contribute inservice time for such a needs assessment, be careful that teachers understand and accept the reasons for spending prep time or inservice time that way. It should be explained that the needs assessment is a reflective process aimed at helping teachers understand themselves and their classrooms better, and assisting them to become more self-reliant and self-initiating in their continuing education.

A prepared questionnaire that simply presents a teacher with a choice from a few "needs" thought up by someone else may not encourage the kind of intellectual exploration, individual criticism, and commitment to improve that a teachers' center should stimulate and support. An invitation to professionalism is not so effectively voiced in a questionnaire as in meetings during which teachers become mindful of next steps for their own learning and contributions they can make to center programming. One center director advises:

> You need some kind of needs assessment that figuratively opens the door. Just sending a list doesn't get far. You need something that helps people think and express themselves.

Needs assessments which actually seek personal expressions of problems and aspirations and recognize differences among teachers take a lot of time. But administering mass surveys also takes a great deal of time—the center's time to design, print, pre-test, distribute; teachers' time to complete the form; time to collect the forms, if they are distributed at various schools; then center's time again to score and analyze results. What is gained in efficiency may be lost in reliability if the return rate on questionnaire surveys is low. Thus many teachers' center leaders have become convinced that personal or group interviews are more cost effective in the long run than large-scale surveys. The interview process not only develops a workshop agenda for the center but also contributes to the center's familiarity, credibility, and to the interviewees' growth through self-reflection on their teaching.

> Face-to-face interviews are costly, but the payoff is tremendous. It is too costly to operate a center and try to build trust at the same time. You get a better return on programs when the trust is there from the start. Interviews lead to good communication; people who have been contacted personally know there is someone listening. They know that they have easy access to someone.

Some centers send an "ombudsman" to school buildings part-time on a regular basis to listen to problems, troubleshoot, help in classrooms, and understand the needs of teachers. The work of one in-school advisor is described in this book by Maja Apelman in "An Advisor at Work."

## Assessing by Interviews

With a well-thought-out interview schedule in hand, center staff members, policy board members, and volunteers can conduct personal interviews of teachers who express interest in the center. Such interviews are undertaken not just to turn up topics for workshops but to build a complex, composite picture of the "whole-teacher" needs and strengths of the center's constituency. The teacher interview developed by the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of North Dakota focuses almost exclusively on the interviewee's own classroom. It can be used to discover and profile needs, to articulate and confirm the teacher's professional resolutions, and to evaluate progress. The interview not only focuses the center's planners; it focuses the interviewees.

> The teacher interview helps you to look at what you believe aout teaching and learning and helps you to talk about what you are doing in your classroom. It helps you to see how things happen in your room, what activities are taking place, and how you look at what's happening. It also helps you to think about how you relate to children and how children in your classroom feel about each other and how they feel about you.[2]

Thumbnail-sketch interviews can be done by phone. To refresh their programming, the board members of the Education Resource Center in Chicago contacted a large sample of their membership with a short interview conducted in 15-minute phone conversations.

The Teacher Resource Center of Boise, Idaho, conducted personal interviews of a random sample of elementary and secondary teachers and administrators in spring 1978. The purpose of the interview, which was conducted by teachers, was explained in advance in a mailing which included the interview questions and went to all staff:

> The Teacher Resource Center will dovetail the information we are collecting with district survey information so that we can meet two levels of needs: teacher needs and organization needs.[3]

The interview schedule is shown in Illustration 3 at the end of this article. The sheet of questions used by the teacher interviewers contained instructions to them and probing questions or "insights" that the interviewer could use to stimulate teacher responses.

## Holding Group Interviews to Surface Needs

Operating a center with a teacher-majority policy board, and basing the program on the results of a mass questionnaire to teachers will not by themselves achieve credibility for the center. Teachers must find the center's basic purposes believable and worthwhile and support them. The needs assessment process can be used to accomplish more than a list of workshop topics and staff services; it can effect teachers' sense of ownership of the center as well as exploration of their own learning problems. Several centers use group interviews to do this.

> A group needs assessment is a long-term process, because you have to allow time for the group to evolve its ideas. Finding support and enthusiasm for your program comes from allowing time to build ownership during the needs assessment process.

The Southwest Florida Teacher Education Center's policy board in Ft. Myers has decided to give up its computerized questionnaire and to conduct personal needs assessments with each school faculty it serves. Its reasons for doing so are as follows:

1. It is important for teachers to talk to each other when identifying inservice needs.

2. It is important for teachers to be able to clarify needs identified.
3. It is important to give teachers immediate feedback.
4. It is desirable for teachers to have direct contact with Teacher Education Center staff or policy board members.[4]

The faculty discussions are conducted by Center staff and board members and structured so that needs are aired by individuals, compiled on newsprint sheets, and prioritized. Group leaders ask, "What is the meaning of this need? Why is this important to us?"

In east central Connecticut, Project RISE, serving nine rural towns, began its existence by holding 19 separate needs assessment meetings with each town's superintendent, each school's principal, and each town's teachers.[5] All were asked, "In order for Project RISE to be successful, what would have to happen?" In the teachers' meetings, teachers' responses were posted on newsprint around the room, grouped, and then each teacher individually ranked the list as to importance. The staff's compilations of these rankings town-by-town became the subject for subsequent planning team meetings at each school. Planning teams consisted of the school principal, about six teacher volunteers, and the RISE director. The planning teams negotiated the admninistrators' and the teachers' priorities, sent them back to their faculties for feedback, and decided on the formats—workshop, seminar, and so forth—for programs to address individual- and group-identified needs.

In her discussion of this needs assessment, Joan Baron, the RISE evaluator cautions:

> A major constraint is that of time. All of the groups involved are extremely busy and resent unnecessary or inefficient meetings which are held after school hours when they are tired and anxious to go home. Consequently, procedures had to be extremely streamlined and promises kept regarding how long a particular meeting would last.[6]

Baron also emphasizes that in the initial needs-generating sessions the center staff met separately with each towns' teachers, each principal, and each superintendent in order to remove the threat to teachers of being judged while expressing their needs.

> However, at the second and third meetings, all participating groups are represented (directly or indirectly) because it is recognized that the teachers, principals, superintendents, and project director must all be satisfied with the goals and implementation.[7]

Group forums, interviews—brief or in depth—questionnaires, or combinations of all of these can be useful approaches to finding out what teachers want from the center. Don't underrate your intuition, which may be the most reliable index of all, but do find ways to confirm it, that will be convincing to others. Before you decide on a particular format ask yourself:

1. Will the assessment yield information you can bank on? Accurate enough, honest enough, holistic enough, numerous enough?
2. Will the assessment elicit information about both need and interest in participating in center programs? About the best formats—workshops, in-class assistance, individual study, courses, seminars? Long- or short-term? After-school, weekends, summer?
3. Do questions encourage dialogue and reflection around crucial issues of the school community?
4. Is the form designed with tabulation and analysis in mind, so that you can get the results and deal with them? (Don't ask a question just because it's interesting; know why you want to know the answer.) Can the questions you ask be ranked so they result in priorities as well as lists of needs?
5. How will you share results with all respondents? Have you encouraged their second thoughts and continuing input? Have you allowed for changes, flexibility, and updating?
6. Is the style of the assessment consistent with the image of the center that you want to convey? Does it help respondents to understand the center's concept and strengths as well as give them a chance to state their needs?
7. Does part of the assessment require reflection on students' needs and encourage the respondent to take some action to help fill those needs? Uncovering deficiencies will do little good if the teacher takes no responsibility for improvement. Will the assessment also uncover teachers' strengths that they can share?

As Christine San Jose and Gail Johnston and Chris Walker emphasize in their articles in this book, the way you find out what teachers need should be part and parcel of everything you do in the center. The essence of a teachers' center is encouraging teachers to examine and work on their abilities and aspirations—as San Jose says, "to find their spirit"—in the context of a safe, non-evaluative, but stimulating professional setting. This approach to needs assessment rather than auditing teachers' deficits, identifies their strengths and potential for better teaching.

## Notes

[1] The preceding quotations are from the author's conversations with directors of teachers' centers. Subsequent quotations that are not footnoted are also from such conversations.

[2] Center for Teaching and Learning, *Staff Development Workbook for Classroom Teachers and Principals* (Grand Forks: Center for Teaching and Learning, Box 8158, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota 58201, 1976), p. 19.

[3] Teacher Resource Center, "Teacher Resource Center Spring Survey 1978" (Boise: Teacher Resource Center, Independent School District of Boise City, 502 Curling Drive, Boise, Idaho 83720, 1978), p. 1.

[4] Southwest Florida Teacher Education Center, "Leader's Manual for Conducting Needs Assessment by Group Process" (Fort Myers: Southwest Florida Teacher Education Center, 2055 Central Avenue, Fort Myers, Florida 33901, 1978), p. 1.

[5] The origins of Project RISE are discussed in the Teachers' Centers Exchange's Occasional Paper No. 2, "A Teachers' Center for Nine Rural Towns" by Peter Martin (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, December 1977).

[6] Joan Baron, "Planning Year Evaluation Report" (Colchester: Project RISE, Halls Hill School, Halls Hill Road, Colchester, Connecticut 06415, 1976), p. 20.

[7] Ibid., p. 22.

## Illustration 1

*Excerpt from Teacher Questionnaire*
*from the Teacher Curriculum Work Center*

Dear Teacher:

The Teacher Center is an informal gathering place for the ongoing education and support of practicing teachers and interested parents. The staff at the Center has seen its task as serving teachers by creating a stimulating yet accepting environment where people are encouraged to try new ways of learning and thinking about teaching. Since its beginning in 1971, the Center has primarily served elementary teachers. At the suggestion of high school teachers in various subject areas, we are exploring how we can expand the services of the Center to respond to the needs of such teachers. In the next school year we would like to add to our resources for high school teachers and provide workshops specifically for you. We are therefore trying to assess your priorities and concerns with regards to your teaching and would appreciate your taking a few minutes to tell us about your interests. Please return the questionnaire to:

*The Teacher Curriculum Work Center*
*1400 East 53rd Street*
*Chicago, Illinois 60615*

## Questionnaire

1. What sorts of teaching resources would be most helpful to you?

a. ______ Workshops on planning units and lessons in a specific discipline.

b. ______ Resource people and information in a particular field of study (i.e. non-Western history, math specialities, etc.) If so, list specific areas in which you have an interest.

______________________________________________

c. ______ Curriculum library and teacher store including texbooks, paperbacks, learning materials, curriculum packages.

d. ______ Bibliographies for various subjects areas. ___________

e. ______ Informal place to discuss, plan and make own materials; having at one's disposal raw materials such as posterboard and having access to ditto, thermofax, and laminating machines.

f. ______ Clearing house where teacher-developed units, lessons, and suggestions are on file.

g. ______ Place to share teaching strategies and concerns in an ongoing study or discussion group.

h. ______ Other ________________________________

2. Do you have units and/or curriculum materials you would be willing to loan or donate for duplication by other teachers who may want to use them?

________________________________________________

In what subject areas are these materials? ________________

________________________________________________

3. What days and times would be best for workshops and/or ongoing courses?

______ Weekday afternoons after school
______ Weekday evenings
______ Saturdays

4. Would you be interested in/willing to attend courses or workshops if they:

______ are offered for credit (with commensurate fee).
______ are not offered for credit but with a small fee.

Teacher Profile

5. Name ______________________ Name of School ______________________

Address ________________

a. How many years have you been teaching? ________________
b. Which grade level(s) are you presently teaching? ____________
c. What classes are you presently teaching? ________________

Please use the remainder of this sheet or another sheet of paper for any comments, suggestions, or questions you have for us, or to expand on any of your answers.

### Illustration 2

*Excerpts from Staff Development Needs Assessment*
*Questionnaire*
*from the Teaching Learning Center*

**Teaching Learning Center**
**Department of Education**
**San Diego County**
**6401 Linda Vista Road**
**San Diego, California 92111**

## Assessment of Staff Development Needs

Your District __________ Grade Level(s) ______ Name __________
(Optional)

The Teaching Learning Center is a mobile center that will be located in your geographic area to provide inservice education based on your needs. We hope that the center will provide opportunities for teachers to interact, share, and learn from each other.

The following 192 activities have been suggested as possible staff development needs. We plan to conduct inservice based on your identified needs. Please study the list, add any activities that you feel strongly about and prioritize your *top ten choices in the entire list*. Weigh your *first choice* with the number "*10*," your second choice with a "*9*," and continue down to "*1*" for your *tenth choice*. Place an X in the appropriate boxes following the desired topics to indicate the kind of inservice wanted. Also indicate possible resource people you might know.

**Elementary K-8 (Needs)**

## List of Possible Staff Development Activities in the Teaching Learning Center (Excerpt)

**Indicate with a number (10-1) your top ten choices**

| No. | 7. LANGUAGE ARTS, READING (cont'd.) | Workshop in center | Meet with resource person | Visit a classroom | Leader suggestions? Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Developing writing skills | | | | |
| | Teaching language arts through music activities | | | | |
| | Utilizing the language texts | | | | |
| | Utilizing the reading texts | | | | |
| | Oral language development | | | | |
| | Language experience approach to reading | | | | |
| | Motivational units on Advertising | | | | |
| | Motivational units on The Yellow Pages | | | | |
| | Motivational units on Poetry | | | | |
| | Ways to organize and manage the Language Arts Program | | | | |
| | Commercial materials: What's available | | | | |
| | Reader's Theatre | | | | |
| | Creative dramatics | | | | |
| | Flannelboard activities | | | | |
| | Using puppets in the classroom | | | | |
| | Alternative approaches to teaching spelling | | | | |

### *Expected Outcomes of Activities in the Teaching Learning Center (Excerpt)*

List the top five staff development activities in the order in which you prioritized them. Then, write two outcomes (skills, learning, knowledge, etc.) that you would expect as a result of having attended a staff development session on that topic.

| ACTIVITY | EXPECTED OUTCOME |
|---|---|
| I. ______________<br>______________ | (1) ______________<br>______________<br>______________<br>(2) ______________<br>______________<br>______________ |
| II. ______________<br>______________ | (1) ______________<br>______________<br>______________<br>(2) ______________<br>______________<br>______________ |

### Illustration 3

*Excerpt from Teacher Resource Center Spring Survey 1978*

**Teacher Resource Center**
**502 Curling Drive**
**Boise, Idaho 83720**

1. WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY ROLE THIS SCHOOL YEAR?

______ K-3
______ 4-6
______ 7-12
______ EXCEPTIONAL CHILD
______ ADMINISTRATIVE
______ SPECIALIZATION

2. IF NO STUDENTS CAME TO SCHOOL HOW WOULD YOU SPEND THAT DAY?

3. WHAT TALENTS DO YOU HAVE TO SHARE WITH OTHER TEACHERS?

4. WHAT KNOWLEDGE OR TRAINING WOULD YOU LIKE OTHER TEACHERS TO SHARE WITH YOU?

5. WHAT TYPE OF DIRECT CLASSROOM HELP WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO YOU?

______ A. More curriculum materials/kits brought to you
______ B. Extra pair of hands in an art, social studies, science project
______ C. Help developing curriculum
______ D. Help diagnosing learning problems
______ E. Help individualizing program
______ F. Help in planning, organizing, implementing learning centers
______ G. Help trying something new
______ H. Other ________________________________

6. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD HELP YOU MAKE BETTER USE OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS?

WORKSHOPS ON: (make-and-take, experts, brainstorming, sharing)

______ A. Integrating available building, TRC, and IMC
______ B. Making supplementary learning aids from recycled or waste materials
______ C. Better utilization of basic textbooks
______ D. Locating, selecting, and evaluating materials and media

7. WHAT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS OR TEACHING STRATEGIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO DEVELOP, IMPROVE, OR PERFECT?

______ A. Planning instructional goals and objectives
______ B. Questioning strategies
______ C. Verbal, non-verbal interactions
______ D. Inquiry procedures
______ E. Individualized instruction
______ F. None of the above
______ G. Other ________________________________

8. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT HUMAN RELATIONS SKILLS WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT?

______ A. Values clarification
______ B. Effective two-way communication
______ C. Building a sense of community in the classroom
______ D. Establishing goals in the classroom
______ E. Problem solving
______ F. Conflict resolution
______ G. None of the above
______ H. Other ________________________________

9. OTHER SUGGESTIONS YOU HAVE REGARDING EFFECTIVE IN-SERVICE . . . .

A TREE TOP
INDIRECT IS NOT
NT......???
MEASURING THOSE THINGS
...... OUT OF REACH!

PHOTO BY KAZUHIKO TSURUTA

# EVALUATING TEACHERS' CENTERS

## *William Hering*

Evaluation of one sort or another is always occurring in a teachers' center. Participants comment on the workshops, the facilities, what the center isn't doing that it could or should be doing, or what it should be doing differently. But most teachers' centers will need to plan a more thorough and focused evaluation, especially to satisfy the questions of outsiders. This is an extremely important decision for a teachers' center staff and policy board to make. The nature of the evaluation helps to determine program content: decisions about what to evaluate will determine how the center's resources are apportioned into different areas of the program.

I've spent much of my career working with curriculum developers. I usually advised them to write the test before they write the curriculum, because the test helps them focus and clarify what students should attend to during their study of the curriculum. (Incidentally, this is probably the most valuable use of the test—for the curriculum makers rather than the curriculum takers.) In the same way, deciding what to evaluate, what questions *you* want answered, what questions your sponsors and funders will ask, how much attention to accord the outcome of some activities (and how little to accord to the outcome of others) will influence enormously the planning of the center's instruction and service. Equally important—and possibly more so—is the decision of *how* to evaluate, because the process used in evaluation will also affect the center's program.

In 1963, Lee J. Cronbach wrote, "Evaluation used to improve the course while it is still fluid contributes more to improving education than evaluation to appraise a product already on the market."[1] From this important observation Michael Scriven coined the terms "formative" and "summative" to describe two kinds of evaluation activities.[2] This is a very helpful distinction for evaluating teachers' centers. Summative evaluation—statements about what was accomplished over time—are often used as a way of justifying the continued existence of a center or of a particular program within a center. Formative evaluation is used as a source of information for policy board and staff members of a center; it provides clues about how well they are accomplishing their goals and suggests areas for improvement.

## Who Decides What to Evaluate?

Evaluation is not just a judgmental or accounting question—"Did they do what they promised? . . . Did we get what we paid for?" It's also a philosophical question—"What good did they do?" All of these questions are related to a prior question—"What did they *intend* to accomplish?"—which is also basically philosophical, or at least not precisely objective. Michael Q. Patton deals with the misconception that evaluation is an objective science:

> Laboring under the assumptions of positivistic social science, we pretend that there is some body of data out there that has only to be collected, at which point we will know what it all means, whether or not it works, whether or not we're successful, whether or not we're effective. Such data do not exist outside the context of a specific group of people with a particular perspective.
>
> This truism about differential perception has enormous implications for evaluation. It means that instead of beginning with the traditional first question of evaluation in textbooks—"What are the program's goals"—we must begin by asking, "Whose goals for the program will be evaluated?" Instead of asking "What's it mean?" we must ask, "Who is going to decide what it means?"[3]

In the evaluation of teachers' centers, many different perspectives on the center and many different notions of the good that is desired produce differing goals, or evaluation criteria. For some, the goal (the good outcome) may be stated in terms of numbers and content: "How many teachers are served by the center for how many contact hours on what subject area priorities?" For others, a goal may be stated in the perspective of organizational development: "Does the presence of the center contribute to improved school climate and cooperative change strategies within buuldings?" For still others a goal may be stated in financial terms: "Does the center accomplish the objective of improving staff skills at a lower cost than the alternative inservice program?" Some people's goals are highly individualistic: "Does my participation in the center's program help me individualize my curriculum so I can cope with all my students' differences in learning levels and styles?" From this array of goals, it would be difficult, though possible, to construct one single evaluation which would satisfy all the goal-setters. If one goal is "serving the maximum feasible number of teachers in the district," can a second goal, "helping individual teachers significantly improve their teaching," also be met? Or, can one provide activities within a teachers' center that accomplish objectives of a district inservice program, but at a lower cost, while still meeting an individual teacher's goal of significantly improving some crucial aspect of classroom teaching? Clearly, some resolution of these different expectations is desirable.

The ideal resolution is to provide some personally meaningful answers about the center's accomplishment to everyone who expresses a concern for the center. Involving these concerned persons in the process of deciding what and how to evaluate is a challenging and rewarding activity for the center's policy board and staff. By developing evaluation plans, receiving reactions from many people, and then revising plans until each can agree that the plan will provide needed answers, the policy board and/or staff can establish the priority goals of the center in practical, understandable terms. Planning the evaluation in this way will directly and naturally influence the program of the center, becoming, in effect, a form of assessing the needs the center will serve. As the operation of a program makes the character and orientation of the center more apparent, the appropriateness of the differing perspectives and goals originally held for the center will become more clear.

## Are Some Outcomes More Measurable than Others? Are Some More Valuable?

Once there is agreement on goals for the teachers' center, there may need to be agreement that some intended outcomes are simply not appropriate for measurement in the literal sense. Highly specific measurements usually result in an emphasis on objectives which must be stated in behavioral terms, or which easily reduce to numerical results. Because some outcomes that would seem desirable for a teachers' center (for example, increasing teachers' sense of efficacy that they can do what their students require) aren't so easily measured, they may receive less attention in developing an evaluation plan. I believe that much, and possibly most, of what's really important in an educational process cannot be measured in the traditional sense. Those goals which aren't reducible to traditional measurements ought to be highlighted so that ways of evaluating their success will receive the greatest consideration. They should not be overlooked in the process of planning an evaluation. After all, these goals may express the most vital and unique elements of the new teachers' center.

Some elements of a teachers' center program can be evaluated with simple, objective, numerical procedures. But it is sometimes appropriate to agree on alternative procedures that are less objective. An evaluation procedure may be inappropriate even though the questions it raises are directly related to the goals of the center. If, for example, a center places highest priority on working with individual or small groups of teachers in a continuing activity that is both personal and situation-specific, it probably is inappropriate to evaluate the center through use of a questionnaire distributed to every person who participated in any center activity over a period of time. To accommodate the need for differing evaluation procedures, an evaluation plan should identify the separate elements of the program being evaluated.

## Are Unintended Outcomes Irrelevant?

But *total* agreement on an evaluation plan may be an unwise course. In insisting that evaluation be limited to the agreed-on purposes of a center, one may overlook and fail to take credit for unplanned bonuses. Consider the hypothetical case of a teachers' center established for a specific purpose—to help teachers improve their skills in teaching mathematics. It might be assumed that teachers do not go to that center to improve their teaching of reading, or of art, or of music, so an evaluation of the degree to which participants feel they have become better teachers of reading, of music, or of art would seem inappropriate. However, to ignore areas which are not explicitly stated as part of the center's goals is to risk missing some very important benefits of a teachers' center.

Imagine that the mathematics teachers' center is well under way, that attendance is what the staff hoped for, that the sense of comradeship and ownership by teachers is very high, and things seem to be going well. Teachers report that they prize the center—they find it of specific and direct help in meeting their day-by-day classroom concerns regarding the teaching of mathematics. This sense of satisfaction is felt in the classroom as well. Principals report that teachers and students seem more interested and teachers report that they are convinced their teaching has improved.

The center can document all of this evidence and suggest the conclusion that the teachers' center has caused this improvement in the teaching of mathematics. Can the center show that its math workshops have caused these changes in performance and attitudes? Is improvement the result of some outstanding presentations made both by outsiders and by the participating teachers and assistants? These seem likely explanations for the success.

However, interviews with teachers, combined with an observation of what actually occurs in the center, might lead to another explanation. Just the availability of the center as a place and concept may be more important than its specific programs. If it provided an opportunity for teachers to interact, to share ideas used in one building or one classroom with others, to receive positive and negative reactions to their ideas—if the center did these things, the optimism and positive attitude toward mathematics teaching might be traced as much to this as to the quality of the formal or stated program.

The success of the center may stem from the fact that teachers have had time to try out their curriculum ideas in the center and get reactions from their colleagues. Or is it because the director of the teachers' center was available to listen and respond, to serve as a sounding board as teachers thought through what they would like to do to improve their teaching? The atmosphere of the center, the openness to new ideas, and the providing of a common ground for teachers to learn from each other may be the explanation for the improvement in participants' math teaching. If so, this would have occurred if the teachers' center had focused on a different content area, and if evaluators probe, they may find improvements in other content areas as well.

To conclude that a center's math programs caused the intended results is probably not doing justice to the whole situation. Less obvious factors also contributed to those effects. Other effects are apparent. These complexities underscore the need for a flexible evaluation process—one that begins with questions that are consistent with the purposes of the center, but is quite capable of responding to changing purposes, or to an analysis of factors that may not seem obviously related to the purposes. Thus, it is wise for evaluation designers to be both clear about intent *and* open to possibilities that unintended outcomes may occur, or that intended outcomes may occur for unintended reasons.

### Where Do Evaluators Look to Find Results?

In a conversation during Education Week at Chautauqua, New York (August, 1977), Theresa Lorio, assistant director of the Detroit Center for Professional Growth and Development, had this to say about evaluation:

> Because we're state funded and have a formal evaluation plan, we have "areas of impact" or, as we call them, "categories of impact." The first one really is to become known. With 350 schools in the system it really took a lot to become known, and of course we're still not known in every school. We also said that we

> would look at the school climate in our demonstration schools—keep track of what we felt the climate was when we came in and note the changes after our work with teachers, students, parents, and administration. Then we were going to look at teachers' behavior. Teachers feel that they have made some change in what they now do as a result of the teachers' center. Finally, as far down the line as possible, we will probably have to look at student performance and whether that can be attributed to the impact of the Center. We've been talking to evaluators from around the country, and they're saying that there is no "clean model" that you can do that with. We evaluate every one of our workshops, and teachers tell us what they feel happened to them . . . what they think they can do with what they learned. We also give teachers a letter about follow-up which says, "Would you be willing to answer a questionnaire in a couple of weeks about what's still happening as a result of this workshop? Would you be willing to have one of our staff members or a consultant come in and observe your classroom when you're doing whatever you say you learned from this workshop? Or would you like us to come in and give you a further demonstration?" One step further, what we found to really be successful is, "Would you be willing to share with us some of the lesson plans and work that you've created as a result of this workshop, or would you send us some of your students' work?" Every year we make those kinds of requests. We say, "If you send it in by this date, it will be on display during our open house." It's amazing the number and kinds of things that come. In the formal evaluation plan each of the Center components has written a whole span of objectives that staff hope to accomplish, and everyone has created a PERT chart, and we turn them in. Are we getting there? Are we going where we want to go? This may be a higher level of sophistication than we ought to be looking at at this time, but it's good for us because we're learning. We're beginning to learn how to write realistic goals, and I think that's probably the key.[4]

How does one go about determining what a teachers' center has accomplished? Once agreement has been reached on what ought to be investigated, how does one conduct the investigation? One can look at four kinds of teachers' center effects: what goes on in the center; what do people (staff, participants, and knowledgeable observers) report about what goes on; what then goes on in participants' classrooms and schools; and how students in participants' classrooms perform according to criteria established by their schools. Later in this article I suggest that the last two are not very useful in evaluating a teachers' center program, and offer two additional effects: teachers' sense of ownership of a center, and teachers' sense of efficacy. Both of these are related to classroom outcomes. These effects can be observed both qualitatively and quantitatively: one can look at a center's effects in terms of numbers of events or in terms of the quality of events. Both views are needed, and in discussing how to find results I include both.

### *Counting Participants*

The most obvious quantitative measure is participation: how many teachers come to the center? What do they come for? When do they come? Do they return? How often? Do they come voluntarily, or are they required to participate in some staff-development activity? The most direct method of counting and profiling a center's clientele is to ask individuals. Many teachers' centers ask that all visitors register each time they come to the center. Sometimes this is more elaborate than a simple sign-in sheet. Those centers concerned with the growth of individual teachers keep participant card files. Teachers attending the center—even for the most trivial reason—make an entry on their card in the file, jotting down the date and purpose of visit.

This record keeping has a number of very useful purposes besides counting for the teachers' center staff. First, it gives staff an immediate sense of the frequency and purposes of participation. This information establishes a personal identity for that teacher; when he or she next visits the center, a staff member can make specific reference to previous visits and purposes. The card file also allows staff members to identify teachers who are coming to the center for similar purposes but at different times or from different schools, and to introduce them to each other. Similarly, it shows attendance from the same school and may help identify school-wide needs that a center can offer to help serve.

Attendance records can be useful in a formative evaluation. For example, if many teachers are reporting that they visit the center to obtain periodicals, books, or lesson worksheets, but the center has been established to provide curriculum development activities by teachers, this discrepancy can be confronted. Additionally, participation record cards allow a quick visual check on those teachers who have been to the center only once or twice and those who are regulars. Staff can contact those teachers who have been to the center but have not returned to discover what they might do to be more appealing to those teachers. This participation record will also indicate whether teachers who have come to the center to participate in a workshop have ever returned for non-workshop activities.

### *Documentation*

The records maintained by a staff can provide information for evaluation purposes. A report on the teachers' center could include the following data:

- the number of workshops presented during a month;
- the number of participants per workshop;
- the title of each workshop;

- background information on the presenters for each workshop;
- a report of the mean score feedback forms completed by participants after each workshop;
- the number of teachers who attended the center for reasons other than workshops;
- the amount of time spent by each teacher on each visit;
- a list of the reasons teachers gave for being at the center when they signed in;
- the quantities of materials used at the center or taken from the center by teachers to be used in their classrooms;
- the hours the center was open;
- a statement about the use of staff time.

All of these data would be useful. An outside observer reading such a report could immediately get some notion of the purposes of the center, and how active it was in serving participants. But it would be difficult to tell whether the center was satisfying the requests of all the teachers it was established to serve. It would also be difficult to gauge the quality of the program. The mean scores produced by teachers evaluating individual workshops would be the only evidence of quality, and one would need to examine the instrument on which teachers rated the worth of each workshop. Even so, it would be difficult to know how helpful the workshop was over the long run, and in the lives of teachers and children.

### *Interviews*

The notes of an interviewer, or the transcripts from recorded conversations with five or six teachers who participated in center activities during a given month, might provide a qualitative evaluation of a teachers' center's program as well as some of its classroom effects. Interviews could include such questions as:

- Why have you been using the teachers' center?
- Would you mind telling a little about your feelings toward the center?
- Has it made any difference in your classroom activities?
- Tell me something about the workshop(s) you've attended. Have they been helpful? How could they have been more helpful?
- What do you think your fellow teachers would say about the teachers' center? What have you heard from other teachers about workshops they've attended?
- Why do you suppose other people do not use the teachers' center?
- Would you miss the center if it were closed?

The results of such interviews, conducted by a skillful interviewer, would be very revealing of teacher attitudes toward the center. The interviews can also tell the reader something about how teachers believe the center has influenced classroom outcomes.

Teachers who have been active in center activities can also be asked to survey fellow teachers in their own schools on an informal basis—speaking with them over lunch, between classes, or after school. This will provide a qualitative evaluation of teachers' response to the center and reasons for their participation or non-participation. Such surveys have added benefit of involving teachers in the role of spokespersons for the teachers' center, thus contributing to their sense of ownership.

### *Questionnaires*

If a teachers' center conducts workshops, it can distribute questionnaires at the conclusion of each workshop. The results will provide center staff with an evaluation of the workshop and will offer an opportunity to ask teachers what else the center might do to meet their needs. Responses to questions about other activities a center might attempt will be more meaningful because they have come from persons who have shown an initial willingness to participate. Although it is much easier to distribute a questionnaire when all participants are gathered for a workshop, results can be more meaningful if teachers wait a week or more to complete the questionnaire. By then, they will have a better opportunity to respond in terms of the usefulness of the workshop in their own classroom teaching. Many teachers' centers conduct workshops which continue over a semester or a year (rather than meeting only once or twice). These workshops attend to teachers' expressed needs by changing the focus over time as new needs become identified. Questionnaires filled out during early meetings at a workshop can, therefore, provide a basis for planning later meetings. Questionnaires about the general program of a center serve the same purpose.

### *Observations*

For an objective and comprehensive view of the variety of activity that goes on in a center, staff or volunteers could spend time at regular intervals simply observing everything that is happening and taking notes. These notes from several observers can give a surprisingly accurate overall picture of what goes on in a center. They convey the flavor of the center, flesh out participation figures, and broaden staff's vision.

Personal journals kept by the center's staff are valuable as a counterpoint to observations and questionnaires in the investigation of the effects of center activities. Journals provide a way for the staff to look back on an event or a period in the center's development, retaining accuracy of detail and gaining the perspective of time. Staff journal jottings can be useful as staff together share perceptions of how well expectations have been met. Journals also provide an opportunity for reflection on one's job, role in the center, and function of the center. Ideally, most or all of these five techniques for identifying the quality and quantity of a teachers' center program should be used; no one technique is sufficient to provide the broad range of evaluative statements a center will seek.

## How One Center Combined Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

If a teachers' center staff wishes to present an objective picture of the scope and value of center activities, it is necessary to focus on both quantity and quality, and to show the results in the context of the purposes of the center. In 1972, the Workshop Center for Open Education at City College of New York engaged the Educational Testing Service (ETS), Early Childhood Research Group, to conduct an evaluation of its program from the time it began, taking into account the purposes of the Center.

The activities of the Workshop Center are suggested in the descriptive statement that appears on its monthly calendar of events:

> The Workshop Center is a free facility for teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and parents. Each month it schedules workshops and seminars on topics of common concern. It provides a shop, a library of books and materials, a darkroom, and space for meetings and slide and film showings. Above all, the Workshop Center is a place to come and talk informally with staff and consultants, a place to browse, to work with materials, to try something new or rethink something not so new, in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere.

The fundamental philosophical goal of the Workshop Center is to help teachers and others (principals, parents, paraprofessionals) broaden their perceptions of the teaching/learning process—awakening them to their own and their students' innate talents and motivations for learning, and expanding teachers' repertoire for flexibly suiting instruction to specific children. In describing the evaluation of the Workshop Center, the ETS report states:

> From the outset, evaluation was seen as formative rather than summative in nature. The intention was that external evaluation activities of ETS would feed

> directly into the ongoing evaluation activities of the Center staff, with the purpose of strengthening and articulating the program. It was also recognized that given the complexity of Center operations, and given the limitations on time, funding, and staff resources, the evaluation would necessarily need to leave several aspects of the Center's work unstudied and selectively focus on the constituency of teachers.[5]

The activities of the ETS staff in its evaluation of the Workshop Center were summarized as follows: (1) Provided consultation on the design of internal records and record-keeping procedures; (2) Participated in and observed a representative sample of Center activities; (3) Conducted a questionnaire survey of workshop participants; (4) Conducted an intensive interview study with a subsample of representative teachers, supplemented with classroom visits; (5) Held periodic meetings with the Center staff for purposes of providing feedback from evaluation activities.

> Members of the evaluation staff visited the Workshop Center at regular intervals, averaging four or five times a month. In some of these visits, evaluation staff participated in a planned workshop activity; at other times, the purpose of the visit was to meet with Center staff. While informal interaction between ETS staff and Center staff occurred continuously throughout the year, there were also formally planned meetings. Several meetings were held concerning the construction and administration of questionnaires and interviews. In these meetings, the Center staff contributed their ideas and criticisms to the development of the instruments. Formal feedback meetings were also held. One major meeting was held in February to go over the content and summary results from the first questionnaire. A second major meeting was held in late June to review with the staff the findings from the questionnaire survey and preliminary impressions from the interview. Periodic meetings were also held with the Center's director for the purpose of discussing her evaluations of the Center's development and findings of the ETS staff. The four Center staff advisors were also interviewed concerning their ideas on the Center's work and the teachers' development.[6]

The full report of this evaluation is well worth reading, for it demonstrates how techniques of observation, interview, questionnaire, administration, and documentation can be used to evaluate a center.[7] It also provides an excellent example of how quantitative data can be obtained along with qualitative information. It does not, however, provide guidance in looking at classroom effects.

## Looking for Effects on Classrooms

If the scope of evaluation of a teachers' center is extended from activities in the center to activities in the classrooms of participants, there is a temptation to make comparisons between teachers' center participants and non-participants. Do teachers who are regular participants in a center teach in ways different from non-participants? Do students of these teachers behave in ways that are different from students of non-participant teachers? Are these students' scores higher than students' of teachers who do not participate? These are the sorts of questions that evaluators might be tempted to ask, because they seem logical and precise and because favorable answers would be so convincing. Further, it is difficult to argue with the assertion that a staff-development program must be justified ultimately by improvement in the education of children.

Yet there are several sound reasons for not using improved test scores as a criterion for success of a teachers' center, at least not initially. In addition to the fact that improvement in education does not come rapidly, there are many who question whether pupil performance on standardized tests is a valid measurement of what students know. Further, much of what we would like to improve in education is simply not most appropriately measured by paper-and-pencil tests.

From my own point of view, the most important reason for not linking the evaluation of a teachers' center to pupil achievement is that to do so is to view the teacher as a "deliverer" of knowledge rather than as a supporter of human growth. Knowledge that is internalized and made a part of the learner's world is not so easily "delivered." Teachers' centers that stress the "training" of teachers to deliver specific programs differ very little from traditional preservice and inservice activities. If the purpose of a teachers' center is to provide stimulation, choice, and support for teachers to become learners—to grow and to discover ways to help their students grow—it is inappropriate to evaluate the center in terms of student achievement on the kind of tests generally available.

In addition, a serious technical difficulty interferes with using student achievement scores to prove the worth of a teachers' center: we do not know how to sort out and "control" all of the factors besides teaching that influence a student's score on a test. We know that native intelligence is important. We know that social class is important, that family influences and values are important, that the attitudes of students are important. And we also know that these elements do not work independently—we cannot control for all except the influence of the teacher. When we compound this problem with the problem of sorting out and assessing all the factors that influence a teacher's learning, we can have little confidence in test scores as a measure of a center's accomplishment.

The final regulation for the first year of the Office of Education Teacher Centers Program recognized that linking the success of a center to a change in student test scores would be a mistake and did not require any evaluation which attempted to make this connection. In commenting on the new Teacher Centers Program, Charles Lovett and Allen Schmieder of the Office of Education provided a list of outcomes that might be analyzed "to give center developers and operators some guidance, whether or not supported by federal funds, regarding the kinds of outcomes they might want to measure, and to stimulate as much thoughtful dialogue as possible about this most important subject." Lovett and Schmeider did not present their list as a recommended set of outcomes that any single evaluation program ought to include, but rather as a list of all *possible* outcomes, some of which centers may want to analyze in this or some adapted form. Their list, in the order they presented it, includes:

1. Effectiveness as perceived by teachers.
2. Effectiveness as perceived by administrators.
3. Degree to which teachers' individual needs are met.
4. Degree to which the high-priority training needs of school systems are met.
5. Relationship of training programs to substance of curriculum of participants in classrooms.
6. Impact on student achievement.
7. Impact on teaching skills.
8. Proximity to schools and participants.
9. Proportion of training during "regular" school hours.
10. Degree of teacher input into program development and implementation.
11. Extent of teacher-developed curriculum used in training programs.
12. Extent to which programs are more comprehensive and systematic than traditional inservice programs.
13. Amount of teacher interaction and sharing of classroom successes.
14. Increase in utilization of new learning concepts. approaches, and research findings.
15. Degree to which teachers are better prepared in high-priority staff-development needs areas; e.g., mainstreaming, basic skills, reading, energy education.
16. Impact in terms of the above on other forms of inservice education.[8]

There appear to be three emphases on the list: the degree to which instructional needs are met—from the point of view of teachers and of administrators, the degree to which teachers are involved in planning and operating the center—feel a sense of "ownership," and the degree to which the teachers' center program differs from previous or concurrently existing inservice programs. (It is important to note that only one of the sixteen suggested outcomes, No. 6, is directly concerned with student achievement and that no mention is made of test scores.) The degree to which instructional needs are met and the degree to which a center's program differs from existing efforts are important concerns; both can be identified through the techniques mentioned earlier. Evaluating the degree to which there exists a sense of ownership on the part of participants, and a related concern, the degree to which a centers' program develops a sense of efficacy, seem to be important alternatives to examining classroom outcomes.

### *Sense of Ownership*

An emphasis on individual participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of a center and upon teacher involvement is consistent with the findings of researchers at the Rand Corporation. Under a contract from the United States Office of Education, Rand conducted a four-year study of innovative projects funded by specified federal "change-agent" programs. Three major questions were raised: (1) How are federally supported innovations and local practices introduced and implemented? (2) How are these innovations sustained and spread after the end of federal funding? (3) What factors in federal policy, in the nature of the change-agent projects, and in the local institutional setting determine the outcome of innovations and their chances of being sustained and spread.

In answer to these questions, Rand conducted a two-phase study. Phase I studied innovations during their next-to-last year of federal funding. Phase II examined the fate of these innovative projects after the end of their federally funded period. The Rand report provides some useful information directly relevant to the question of how teachers' centers ought to be organized, offer their programming, and what they ought to evaluate.

> In summary, teacher participation appears to benefit the implementation and to promote the continuation of project methods and materials in at least two important ways. First, because of their close day-to-day involvement with project operations, teachers are in the unique position to provide feedback about project activities and suggest effective corrections or modifications. These reality-based modifications appear to promote effective project implementation and thus the percent of goals achieved. Second, participation appears to endow teachers with

a sense of ownership that inspires them to work hard for project success and to continue using project methods or materials.[9]

## *Sense of Efficacy*

The Rand researchers also examined the realtionship between certain teacher characteristics and the implementation and continuation of successful innovations. They collected data on the following characteristics of teachers: age, educational background, verbal ability, years of experience, and sense of efficacy. (Age and educational background were not used in their final analysis, because age was highly correlated with experience and there was little variation in teachers' educational background.)

In looking at the three principal characteristics—years of teaching experience, sense of efficacy, and verbal ability—the Rand researchers found that verbal ability had no relationship to project success with the exception of a positive correlation with improved student achievement. There was a negative relationship between number of years of a teacher's experience and most project outcomes. They had this to say about the remaining variable, teachers' sense of efficacy:

> The teacher's sense of efficacy—a belief that a teacher can help even the most difficult or unmotivated student—shows a strong positive relationship to all of the dependent variables in our analysis. Indeed, . . . the effects of a sense of efficacy are among the strongest relationships identified in our analysis. . . . Teachers' attitudes about their own professional competence, in short, appear to have major effects on what happens to projects and how effective they are. . . . The powerful effect of a teacher's sense of efficacy raises the question of whether it might be possible to enhance it through various project or school activities. Because we did not measure this teacher attribute before the project began, we cannot say whether project activities (such as training) may have changed it. Our impression is, however, that it reflects teachers' school experiences as well as their personalities. If so, staff development strategies aimed at teachers and their environment might increase their sense of efficacy.[10]

The Rand findings strongly suggest that if a teachers' center can show that it increases teachers' sense of efficacy, it is improving the instruction in classrooms.

How can a teachers' center staff find out whether they are contributing to the development of a teacher's sense of efficacy and sense of ownership in the center? *Ask*. And take notes so that the results can be shared with staff members and other concerned people. It's something of a compliment to ask people for their opinion, and most people will respond volubly when asked. This can be done informally — asking the teacher if he or she can spare a few moments to discuss how work at the center is going — will gain results more immediate and as rich as those from a formal, structured interview. But it is important to record such conversations with care and to discuss them carefully among all center staff.

In addition to standard questions such as "Why do you attend, how often do you attend, why do you think others don't attend," and so forth, the interviewer can ask participants to talk openly and freely about the teachers' center: how do they feel about the center now that it's been around for a while? Do they feel that their teaching has improved as a result of participation in the center? In what ways? Is their feeling about being able to cope any different from before? Are they comfortable in the center? Do they think that the center has caused them to come to know other teachers better? Have they used the center for activities other than today's activity? Has the nature of their participation changed over time? How? Would they be willing to help involve other teachers in center activities? Do they have some unit or technique or activity to share with other teachers?

These questions and the answers that they produce can be used as evaluation data if the teachers interviewed are reasonably representative of the center's whole clientele. Such data can be displayed in charts and graphs and made available for persons interested in making summative statements about effects in the center, in classrooms, and on students. Much more important, though, is their use in a formative sense for teachers' center staff and policy board discussions. The fact that staff members or participants are analyzing questionnaire results, tabulating and filing information obtained on teacher "sign-in" cards, interviewing teachers and discussing their opinions with other staff members, or gathering information about participation is important in and of itself. Those most concerned about the teachers' center are broadening their vision by finding out how others respond to it. Staff are gaining continual feedback about users' perceptions of the center so that they can revise the agenda, or even change its emphasis, according to what participants say is needed. Such evaluation makes it clear that the teachers' center staff is interested in participant reactions. If they also respond to these reactions with changes, participants will have a greater sense of ownership in the center. And if the center serves as a sharing place in which teachers' opinions are respected and communicated to others, teachers' sense of efficacy will surely develop.

## Other Measures

Because they require research expertise, I've not mentioned those measures that a researcher might appropriately want to apply to a center. One example of such a measure is an analysis of the degree to which participants in teachers' centers interact with other participants, as contrasted with their interaction with peers who are not participants. If one function of a teachers' center is to increase collegiality among staff—a goal often cited as important in staff development—some knowledge of the growth of collegial interchange within the school or area served would be very useful to the teachers' center policy board and staff. To accomplish this would require sociometric measures of conversation patterns within schools and in situations outside of school, an analysis of these according to participation in a teachers' center, and analysis of the professional content of the conversations.

Another measure appropriate to the researcher would be an assessment of the degree to which teachers who participate in center activities express a greater sense of efficacy in their classroom teaching than do teachers who do not participate. Discovering this would require careful and sensitive interviews of teachers before they participate in center activities, repeated at some later point in time, and administered to two sets of interviewees: those who do and those who do not participate.

Experienced researchers can suggest other measures which can provide useful information for a teachers' center. I have emphasized measures that I believe are appropriate for teachers' centers to undertake as self-evaluation, because I believe this is the most necessary and useful kind of evaluation for a center. This is not to say that external measures conducted by a skilled researcher are unimportant, but they may not be ready at hand. As a teachers' center staff works to stimulate and support the professional growth of individual teachers, they must also assess and understand the effects of their work—for their own and the center's development.

A teachers' center with an interest in evaluation may contact the Teachers' Centers Exchange, and we will try to put you in touch with other centers doing useful work. What follows are descriptions of extensive evaluations in teachers' centers. Availability and cost of each complete report will vary, and readers should contact each address for order information.

*An Evaluation and Description of the Advisory and Learning Exchange, 1973-74.* Advisory and Learning Exchange, 1101 Fifteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. The Bureau of Educational Evaluation (BEE) at Hofstra University contracted with the Advisory and Learning Exchange (ALE) to conduct an evaluation of the major functions of that center during the 1973-74 academic year. Data from 1973 summer workshops were also analyzed. The major questions addressed in this report are: What effect do workshops have on participants? What types of workshops are attended by which groups of people? To what extent is ALE used as a resource center, and by whom?

In addition to undertaking a demographic analysis of the participants, the evaluators observed workshops; developed, administered, and analyzed questionnaires; and observed participants' classrooms. The report states:

> In a dynamic institution such as ALE, which is highly responsive to its environment, evaluation must contribute to the decision-making at all times. If this does not occur, the data will become stale and useless. The systematic evaluation of ALE's functions, therefore, had a built-in feed-back mechanism. Each month the evaluators reported their observations and data analysis results and then made specific recommendations. Such monthly feed-back took place in discussions with the ALE staff, whenever the director of BEE visited ALE. It is important to note here that the ALE director and staff fully understood the reasons for the process evaluation and were aware of its importance to their decision-making process. The evaluator's verbal reports were often taken into account when deciding future directions. The evaluation was perceived as contributing to positive change, rather than as a source of anxiety and threat which is so frequently the case when an outside group conducts an evaluation. The evaluators were truly welcome as contributors to ALE's functioning.

This very thorough evaluation sought, in addition to participants' verbal responses, evidence that classroom organization and materials used reflected the experiences present during ALE activities. The report contains examples of the questionnaires and observation forms used.

*Final Technical Report: The Teachers' Center, A Facility for Upgrading Educational Performance in Mathematics.* Leonard Warren, Center for the Improvement of Mathematics Education, P.O. Box 81594, San Diego, California 92138. This document serves as an example of an evaluation report prepared for a funding agency (the National Science Foundation). It contains an abundance of data on participation frequency and user characteristics. These data are combined with results from interviews with participants to provide introspective reporting on center activities and suggestions for additional program needs.

*G.A.M.E., Inc., Documentation 1974-75* by Beth Alberty. Bette Korman, G.A.M.E., 260 West 86th Street, New York, New York 10025. The director

**WILLIAM HERING**

of G.A.M.E. (Growth Through Art and Museum Experience) writes in the report:

> The evaluation had to meet many conditions, as well as serve several audiences. It had to be consistent with the underlying idea we had that art is a unique and individual experience that is integrated with other areas of learning and understanding, and can serve as a way of broadening and deepening learning, which is likewise very individual and particular. It had to convey the specific *process* of our curriculum work through the arts, and the particular *quality* of shared planning with teachers and of the experiences of children, teachers, student teachers and high school interns at G.A.M.E. It had to take into account the complex and multi-faceted relationships between schools, G.A.M.E., and museums. And it had to consider the elements of time and continuity of relationship which provide the framework for all the activities in the program.

To accomplish such an evaluation, G.A.M.E. used a documentation process. The report includes program descriptions, excerpts from children's diaries, teacher interviews, staff logs, reports from observations, teacher weekly records, visitor records, teacher questionnaires (with results in a separate publication), and other records. This report provides an example of the extensive use of documentation, a detailed description of the G.A.M.E. program, and models that other centers can use for reporting their activities in a qualitative format.

*Teacher Curriculum Work Center: A Descriptive Study* by Sharon Feiman. Vito Perrone, Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota 58201. $2.00. This report documents activities of the Teacher Curriculum Work Center (TCWC) in Chicago by assembling and synthesizing data obtained during a two-month period in 1974. Data sources included sign in/out forms completed by users, personal data sheets completed by visitors, and observational data. Written records of the center and transcripts of interviews with the staff were also used.

Qualitative data, such as user characteristics, are presented and used to extrapolate qualitative statements. Appendix F provides an example of an observation form used to identify activities during a specific time period. Other appendices contain forms used by the center to obtain data on users and visitors. Topics in the report include history and philosophy of the TCWC, program descriptions, organizational structure, user characteristics, and teacher behaviors in the center. The final chapter summarizes TCWC activities, identifies some of the center's strengths, and suggests some major themes and common commitments of the staff.

*First Year Evaluative Study of the Workshop Center for Open Education.* Workshop Center for Open Education, 6 Shepard Hall, City College, 140th Street and Convent Avenue, New York, New York 10031. Although this report was published in 1973, it is a timely accounting of the processes used to assess the first year of this center's operations. Portions of the report have been presented in this article; readers are urged to obtain and read the entire report.

*Interdisciplinary Team, Minneapolis Public Schools/University of Minnesota Teacher Center: Report of Its Operations 1976/77* edited by Gerald J. Brunetti. MPS/UM Teacher Center, 155 Peik Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455. This report discusses the first year's efforts of a team of eleven part-time staff members with individual specialities, who responded to inservice requests from teachers in the Minneapolis area. In addition to describing the team's activities and procedures, the report presents an assessment of their work in schools that is based on interviews with teachers in three schools. The reports from each school serve as excellent examples of how an interviewer can obtain useful information on a center's staff and present it in a helpful and specific format. Appendix C provides an exemplary interview style for formative evaluation.

*A Report on NSF-Supported Teachers' Centers.* David P. Butts, Department of Science Education, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602. The National Science Foundation has provided support for six teachers' centers. This report is a result of interviews with 59 teachers who were regular participants in those centers, conducted over a two-year period. The final chapter interweaves interview results with perceptions reported by teachers' centers' staffs, statements made in proposals to the National Science Foundation, and documents from the centers. The report is useful for a general overview of the six centers as well as for an example of the use of interviews and other sources of information to identify and interrelate differing perceptions of purpose and practice.

## Notes

[1] Lee J. Cronbach, "Evaluation for Course Improvement" in *New Curricula*, ed. Robert W. Heath (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 236. Reprinted from *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 64, No. 8, May 1963.

[2] Michael Scriven, "The Methodology of Evaluation" in *Perspectives of Curriculum Evaluation*, ed. Ralph Tyler, Robert Gagne, and Michael Scriven (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967), p. 43.

[3] Michael Q. Patton, "Evaluating Teacher Centers" in *Teacher Centers: What Place in Education?* ed. Sharon Feiman (Chicago: Center for Policy Study, The University of Chicago, 1978), p. 137.

[4] Theresa Lorio, remarks in "Commonality and Diversity in Four Teachers' Centers: Conversation at Chautauqua," Teachers' Centers Exchange Occasional Paper No. 3 (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, July 1978), p. 7.

[5] Edward Chittenden et al., *First Year Evaluative Study of the Workshop Center for Open Education, City College of New York* (New York: Workshop Center for Open Education, 6 Shepard Hall, City College, 140th Street and Convent Avenue, New York, New York 10031, 1973), p. 8.

[6] Ibid., p. 9.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Charles Lovett and Allen Schmieder, "The New Teacher Center Program" in *Commissioner's Report on the Education Professions 1975-76: Teacher Centers*, comp. Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), pp. 139-140.

[9] Paul Berman and Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin, *Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change, Volume VII: Factors Affecting Implementation and Continuation*, R-1589/7-HEW (Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, April 1977), p. 117.

[10] Ibid., pp. 136-138.

PHOTO BY RONALD AUSTIN

# FINDING A PLACE AND FURNISHING THE SPACE*

*Mary Seager*

The physical premises of your teachers' center will shape your program as much as your home shapes your life. As you begin to plan your location and furnishings, consider that the organization you're building is to be literally a *center* drawing teachers from dispersed locations and predispositions. Keep in mind that it is crucial to the center's success that teachers will *want* to come to this place and will come on their volition and time.

## "Rooms Wanted: Cheap, Accessible, Spacious, Flexible"

Your location must be considered in terms of geography and in terms of institutional identity. Deciding what image you want the physical site to project is a matter of clarifying who *you* are (the group organizing the center) and of assuring that as far as possible your physical premises are in harmony with your group's and your future participants' personalities and purposes. Define yourselves: choose ten adjectives that describe your group and your ideals. Then try to define the teachers you plan to work with: write down ten more adjectives to describe these teachers' work situations, interests, problems, allegiances, beliefs. Do these self-images suggest the center should be physically within or outside of school district buildings? University buildings? What are the advantages and disadvantages of an independent location?

What location in your service area is most accessible and/or appropriate? Can intended participants easily get to your site from their schools? Or, is it more important that your site be accessible to their homes? Should there be close public transportation or easy highway access or both? Will a potential site unintentionally but inevitably tend to exclude some teachers? Are there particular places you want to be close to—for instance, the university, museum, library, park, restaurants, stores, parking, community center, school district professional library or media center? The center's location will dictate the hours the center can be open. Will someone answer the phone and will doors be open after 5:00 p.m. and on weekends? Will evening sessions require special arrangements and fees for janitorial or security services?

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*This article was compiled from collaborative writing by staff members of the Learning Center (St. Louis), the Teacher Curriculum Work Center (Chicago) and the Learning Exchange (Kansas City) during the school year of 1976-77. More ideas and advice have been added from the Proceedings of the June 1977 St. Louis Workparty sponsored by the Teachers' Centers Exchange.[1]

If you've located a possible place, consider whether it's safe for meeting, parking, and walking in the daytime and evening, and also whether it is perceived as safe, which is just as important. Will people feel comfortable—welcome and unpressured—coming to this location? Is the neighborhood upbeat or run down? Is it stimulating, intriguing? How is it likely to change in the near future? Is private or public money coming into the neighborhood or going out? Are business interests in the area a possible resource to you?

The geographical location of the center is only one of several factors that you will need to consider in making your choice of site. Other factors are the suitability of the buildings or rooms that are available, and the financial and human resources you can invest. Of course, you will have to make compromises, balancing your "ideal site" with what is actually available and the realities of your human and financial resources.

Figure 1 is a worksheet to help you weigh these location and interior space factors. You can complete the worksheet for each site you are considering seriously. Following are some of the requirements you might decide to list on the worksheet as "essential" or "nice to have" (but can live without).

- appropriate and sufficient space for immediate needs: teachers' program and work area, announcements and display area, staff work space/office, storage;
- bathroom, adequate plumbing;
- adequate lighting, heat (air conditioning), fresh air circulation;
- wiring (with grounds and enough outlets) for power tools, audiovisual equipment, and other electrical needs;
- structural soundness;
- extensive storage;
- location on ground level and/or access to street for loading and unloading;
- refreshment area with sink or full kitchen;
- gym area;
- darkroom (or potential space);
- educational library and curriculum materials storehouse;

Figure 1

*A Worksheet to Help You Organize Priorities**

| | Space has already | Can be modified | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|
| Essentials | | | |
| Nice to have | | | |

*Ask yourself, "Can we live with x? Can we live without x?"

- outdoor space;
- space for both small- and large-group meetings/workshops;
- play area for children (indoors and/or outdoors);
- security within the building;
- safe, pleasant surroundings;
- freedom to set your own hours;
- freedom to design, construct, revamp your own space;
- room for expansion without having to relocate;
- free custodial services;
- free utilities;
- parking;
- proximity to most participants' schools or homes;
- proximity to public transportation;
- co-tenancy with project/people who share costs and complement your program;
- access for handicapped users;
- proximity to another facility/institution/origanization that draws teachers;
- promise of long-term tenure (justifying investment of your sweat and equity).

If you decide that you need to locate space that's not in a school district or a university building, you must be very resourceful and flexible. It might be that the old auto body shop could become your dream center. Other possibilities are:

- teachers' professional organization building or meeting space;
- school portable or mobile home;
- warehouse;
- church (basement or church school);
- library;
- house/large garage/barn;
- loft or studio space;
- community center;
- storefront;
- office suite;
- exhibition hall (fairgrounds);
- park or recreation building;
- unused building on a military base;
- van or truck.

Suggestions for space can come from real estate agents, classified ads, Chamber of Commerce, business people, service organizations such as YMCA and YWCA, Jewish Community Centers, Scouts, United Way, sugardaddies and fairy godmothers. Once you locate a possibility, ask an architect friend to look it over. If you don't know one, see whether the local university's school of architecture would be interested in designing the center as a class project. You should look any gift horse in the mouth. There may be strings attached that you can't work with. Find out regulations for and limitations on use of the space ahead of time. For example, be sure the center will not be forced to move before you are ready for it.

Figure 2 is a checklist to help you compare and contrast the cost and legal requirements of the sites you have under consideration. You may want to compare cost per square foot at different sites. If you have already decided on one, you can use the list to help prepare your budget. Remember that disadvantages at a site may be balanced by advantages, and vice versa.

## "Designer Wanted: Ingenious, Intuitive Workhorse"

As Chris Walker, formerly of Kansas City Learning Exchange, reminds us, "Your space is your face—it can be friendly and inviting or aloof and impersonal." Like the expression on your face, the decor and ambience of your teachers' center determine visitors' first impression and strongly influence whether they return. If you want the teachers' center to impress teachers as special and useful, you need to convey three ideas: first, the center is space that *belongs* to teachers; second, it is a space where teachers *work*; third, it is a space which *honors* teachers' and children's learning and initiative. It is essential, then, that center staff not dominate the space with their own desks and filing cabinets. The center's image should be that of an active-learning and work center, not an office or merely a lounge or meeting room.

The unique quality of American "grassroots" teachers' centers—started on teachers' initiative often as part of, but sometimes independent from, school districts or universities—is that teachers set their own course of study at the center. A higher authority does not *allow* teachers to prescribe for themselves—teachers just *do*. This is a subtle but vital distinction that must be made visible. The whole environment of the center, as well as the procedures for using its space and operating its equipment, should encourage and enable any teacher to take initiative: to recommend or contribute a book to the center library, or an item for the newsletter; to display their students' work; plan a course; volunteer time; teach a workshop. The design objective in furnishing a teachers' center is to create an environment where teachers can *do* for themselves. A center that is mainly a storehouse of curriculum goodies—with commercial texts and learning kits, references, media, and librarian

## Figure 2

*Building Costs and Legal Requirements*

| | Purchase | Lease | Rent | Free | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I. INITIAL MONEY (one-time costs) | | | | | |
| *Space Fees* | | | | | |
| Inspection fees | | | | | |
| Architects' fees | | | | | |
| Construction/building code fees | | | | | |
| Lawyers' fees | | | | | |
| [illegible] payment | | | | | |
| First and last month's rent | | | | | |
| Security/cleaning deposit | | | | | |
| Utility deposits | | | | | |
| Closing costs | | | | | |
| Modification/repairs (immediate and long-range) | | | | | |
| *Safety Requirements Outlay* | | | | | |
| Fire extinguishers | | | | | |
| Sprinkler system | | | | | |
| Smoke detector | | | | | |
| Security alarm system | | | | | |
| X bathrooms per x people | | | | | |
| Exits and fire escapes | | | | | |
| Access for handicapped users | | | | | |
| II. MONTHLY PAYMENTS | | | | | |
| *Rent and Utilities* | | | | | |
| Rent, mortgage and interest (likely to increase? when?) | | | | | |
| Utilities | | | | | |
| Telephone | | | | | |
| Property taxes | | | | | |
| *Insurance* | | | | | |
| Liability (special considerations for tool shop?) | | | | | |
| Fire, etc. (special considerations for recycle?) | | | | | |
| Theft | | | | | |
| *Security* (needed? effect on insurance rates?) | | | | | |
| *Maintenance* (if not by staff) | | | | | |
| Elevator | | | | | |
| Building upkeep (inside and outside) | | | | | |
| Custodial services | | | | | |
| Gardening | | | | | |
| III. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS | | | | | |
| *Release Clauses/Obligations* | | | | | |
| *Limitations by Landlords/Leaseholders* | | | | | |
| Obligations to landlord or donor | | | | | |
| Open hours | | | | | |
| Structural changes/space changes | | | | | |
| Permanency of contents | | | | | |
| program/activities restrictions | | | | | |
| Atmosphere restrictions | | | | | |
| *Resale/Investment Value* | | | | | |
| *Length of Tenancy* (temporary, semi-permanent, forever if you wish?) | | | | | |

services—will not inspire participants' involvement. They will come, look, maybe research, and walk out.

Develop a space that "understands" and responds to teachers—their interests, abilities, accomplishments, problems. Think of the center as a place of transition for teachers—a place that values where they are now and also maps out some new destinations. Knowing the classrooms and homes of the people who will use the center may help determine what arrangements and furnishings will impress them as inviting, relaxing, stimulating, purposeful. Teachers who use the center will eventually help rearrange it and create the atmosphere.

What makes a center accessible and encourages use? Parking, central and safe location, convenient hours, an area for resting, eating, and conversations, quiet nooks or corners for solitary thinking, writing, or consulting with staff, tools, work space, and storage for designing and making learning equipment and gathering lesson materials, flexible and comfortable spaces for small and large-group meetings—these are fairly basic requirements.

What makes the center inviting, relaxing, and purposeful? Cheerful, unpretentious, casual spaces are necessary but these must also be clean, quiet, and orderly if work is to be done. Too large a room will discourage physical closeness and will result in less sharing among participants, less risking by beginners, fewer friendships. On the other hand, small rooms may cause the irritation of constant crowding. If furniture is chosen and arranged with flexibility as a criterion, workshop leaders and participants can design their own arrangements of tables, chairs, and materials. Teachers are experts at ordering activities and classroom space. Given encouragement, they will constantly improve, even transform the center's space. Celebrate your opening with a "shower" to which teachers bring gifts for the center. They will know exactly what you need. Nothing in the setting is as important as the atmosphere of warmth, welcome, and invitation to the newcomer to explore, take initiative, and feel at home.

## Form Follows Function

Here is a partial list of what teachers do in their center's space: browse, talk, relax, think, interact, share, search, manage, make, build, explore, teach, learn. The space should set a mood that enhances these activities and that allows for diversity of people and programs.

If your ideas about the kinds of program and people you will work with are clear, but visions of the space you need are fuzzy, begin your program with a temporary arrangement and use your early experience to plan and redefine.

This way you involve center participants in the process of deciding on and designing the space. Starting small and simply, you do not purchase or build things that turn out to be unsuitable. Your center can evolve as needs emerge, as staff grows and changes, as participants discover by experience what they like and what works.

If you have made a relatively permanent investment in a place, you will start out with a given number of square feet of space, its general shape, and restrictions and possibilities for development. Restrictions need not be handicaps; they can force you to plan imaginatively. A smaller place may be preferable to a big one for more than budgetary reasons. Too much space can lead to sprawl and make it hard to define work areas.

The following space requirements should be considered as you try to fit your program priorities into your new quarters:

- reception area/sign-in desk;
- lounge area;
- library;
- working space and surfaces for participants
    open workshop areas/classroom;
    small-conference space;
    private, quiet corners, nooks, lofts;
- art/painting/crafts area (including space for "wet and messy" activities);
- carpentry/shop area;
- recycle depot and design center;
- storage areas;
- office or work area for staff.

Add your own desired spaces to this list. Then consider each work area in terms of its specifications. Which will need more-or-less permanent installations of equipment or furnishings? Which are used with greatest frequency by larger numbers of people? Which will create traffic, congestion, noise, mess? Can some areas be combined? Finally, which areas are absolutely essential, and which would be nice to have, but not necessary.

Large- and small-group activities (workshops, meals, performances, meetings) may take place in more than one of the above spaces; some will be used much more often than others. Conferences will require moving dividers to combine areas for large meetings, as well as scheduling simultaneous small-group discussions. Ideally the space arrangement should be flexible enough for a wealth of actitivities ranging from gracious meals for 50 to candle- and furniture-making; printing children's writing to working with natural materials; performances, lectures and open houses, to individual advising.

### *Reception Area/Lounge*

It takes warm hearts, something soft to sit on, something lovely to look at, and an atmosphere of sharing to create a hospitality area where newcomers can be welcomed and where participants can relax and share their experiences. The essential extra elements in creating such an inviting atmosphere are food and drink. It is easy to provide a coffee pot. A formal kitchen isn't necessary, but you definitely can use a hot plate, refrigerator, sink, and large disposal bins, since these make luncheons possible, as well as workshops in cooking, crafts, and science. (Many teachers are experts at doing all of these activities with one electrical outlet and a sink down the hall.) Frequently the center's library and sign-in book or desk are adjacent to the lounge. If this area has the only comfortable chairs or couches in the center, discussion groups and advising will probably take place there, too.

### *Drop-In Area*

The hours scheduled for drop-in use of the center can be afternoons after school, evenings, or Saturdays. These hours will depend on the location of the center, the availability of your staff (and volunteers), and the habits and preferences of teachers. During drop-in hours teachers may consult with a staff advisor, read or browse through books and curriculum materials, collect idea sheets and recycle materials to use in their classrooms, make equipment or lesson materials, and relax and talk with other participants. The "can-do" atmosphere that prevails in the center and the expectations and opportunities that the staff convey largely determine whether drop-in participants begin to take part in other center programs. A staff member or volunteer should talk with drop-in visitors to suggest other center programs and to put them in touch with other participants. A small staff necessitates shipshape organization of the drop-in area. There must be a warm, welcoming handout describing the center and the activities available during unscheduled use. In a prominent place there should be a sign-in sheet or card file where participants can register each attendance. Often the "drop-in" and "display" areas will overlap.

### *Material, Equipment, and Displays*

You can arrange for books from the school district's professional library to be available in the center and do the same with audiovisual equipment and sample curriculum materials. However, choose only those materials that you (or a committee of teacher-participants) recommend. Materials may be organized by integrated or by separate subject areas. In any case, there should be a variety, and displays should be changed regularly. Invite teachers to share their curriculum inventions and their students' best work. Several centers encourage participants to make displays of work done during a workshop and the resulting children's work done in the classroom.

Plants, animals, miniature ponds, and stream tables greatly enliven a center. They must evidence your attentive care, however—their neglect will speak volumes. Display them in ways appropriate for classrooms and with suggestions for integration into curriculum and for care and feeding. Post a list nearby of teachers who have volunteered to advise other teachers on setting up live environments in the classroom. Some photographs are helpful here!

Duplicating and laminating machines can provide more than a convenient service for teachers; they also invite person-to-person interaction in the center. Instead of having participants pay center staff to run a machine or photocopy materials, where feasible have a center staff member, volunteer, or experienced user show newcomers how to operate the machines themselves. This is a way to get to know participants. (The center can still collect for photocopying or lamination, when payment for these services is part of center income.)

Consider providing a shop where teachers can build objects they need for their classrooms from triwall cardboard or wood. This facility will attract many people who would not otherwise come to the center. Similarly, a printing area with a typewriter, rubber stamps or type, press type, drawing supplies, and a variety of papers not only provisions the staff's publicity tasks, but offers participants a practical facility that stimulates teachers and students to do more writing and to circulate their work. Both carpentry shop and printing area are facilities that add to the atmosphere of enabling teachers to do for themselves.

In every area of the center, materials available for teachers to work with should be out in the open and arranged so they invite use. Large-print signs and clearly labeled instructions are needed to encourage teachers to use materials and to put them back.

Newcomers and occasional participants are the major audience for displays. Still, these must be changed regularly, because static displays strongly imply to every participant that nothing is going on at the center. Displays can originate in the center's workshops. You can ask teachers to leave prototypes of curriculum materials they have developed and to share their students' work.

One permanent display that would be ever-changing could be a map on which participants stick a small flag listing their name, home address, and school. Such devices make center users aware of other participants from their neighborhood and school, as well as help newcomers feel they belong.

As you design a display, bear in mind whether it will invite teachers to do a hands-on activity while they're in the center, or will simply suggest ideas for them to try out in the classroom. One kind of display could serve as an example of how learning materials for students or their own work could be displayed in class. Above all, a display should honor the teachers, students, or others whose work it shows, and it isn't finished until you discover whether people are learning from it.

Because a teachers' center is the product of many peoples' minds and work, the space can look overpowering, cluttered, and confusing. Having more on view than can be taken in at leisure may create feelings of compulsion, frustration, weariness. Keep some of your materials in reserve so that it is easy to change or renew displays frequently. As you seek to provide novelty and stimulation, guard against seeming flashy or overly complex. Many teachers will find those kinds of displays too far from the reality of their own classrooms, and may feel dull, inadequate, and thus discouraged in the center. Be watchful, self-critical, and ask people their reactions to what you put in your space.

### *Make-and-Take Area*

To some observers of teachers' centers, make-and-take activity suggests an inadequate intellectual investment and return--the teacher simply copying materials for tomorrow's class without working them into an overall curriculum or considering individual students' needs or interests. But to teachers who seldom use a game in the classroom or divide the class up for small-group activities, the game they make or the interest center they create is a vital starting point. In addition, make-and-take curriculum construction, whether during drop-in time or in a scheduled workshop, produces hands-on involvement and repeated use of the center by teachers who are intent on adding learning games, subject-area centers, or new apparatus to their classrooms. However, these participants will stop coming once they have made what they need unless the staff designs a natural bridge from make-and-take to other center programs. Notices of upcoming events, a long-term calendar, descriptions of ongoing services posted prominently in the make-and-take area will inform teachers and help stimulate their interest in other center programs. Most effective are personal invitations to make-and-take participants to join more long-term activities or to contribute some of their students' work to the center.

The way the staff responds to teachers' ideas or requests, the curriculum

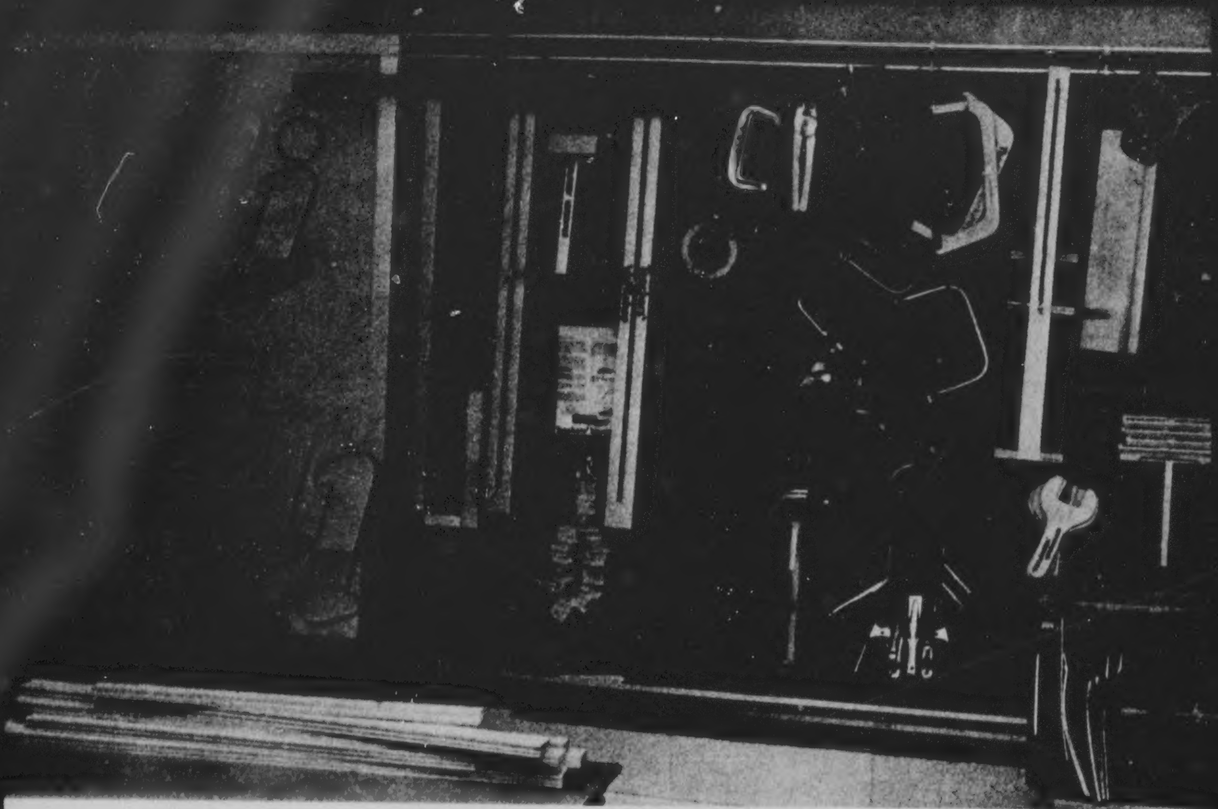

PHOTO BY RONALD AUSTIN

ideas that are made available as models, and the organization of the tools and raw materials provided, all convey the center's philosophy about teachers as learners, creators, and decision makers in their classrooms. At the same time these provide a powerful model for how teachers will conduct and provision their classrooms.

Here are some "Do's" for a make-and-take area.

- present resources—both models and raw materials—so teachers will take responsibility for design and content decisions, considering the individual needs and interests of their students. Interaction between center staff and participants is an important part of this process.
- provide techniques and ideas rather than finished products, raw materials rather than packages, so that teachers adapt and experiment rather than simply copy.
- provide clear, visually striking directions for the use of equipment, supplies, storage. Store materials so that they are accessible, organized, easy to put back. These should serve as models for how teachers could organize resources in their classrooms.
- invite teachers to contribute and display in the make-and-take area their own ideas and samples of students' work.
- Figure 3 lists expendable supplies, equipment, and tools with which to furnish your make-and-take area. Use this checklist to make your own shopping and scrounging lists (divide into "must have" and "nice to have").

### *Carpentry/Shop Area*

Whether the center offers construction with triwall cardboard and/or wood, the shop can be a place where teachers can feel free to try something they've never done before, create something useful, get hands-on experience working with large materials, learn new skills, and dare to fail. Often a cardboard carpentry workshop brings a person to the center for the first time. Because cardboard is a creative material, participants leave with tangible products, new skills, and good feelings about their ability to visualize in three-dimensions, solve problems, and work with their hands.

If you don't have the space or money to set up a separate carpentry shop, you can start with a small, well-organized toolbox to be used in the center's open workspace. Even this will provide teachers the tools they need to build equipment for math (one example would be equal-arm balance scales), biology (terrariums), geology (stream tables), physics (suction pumps), and language arts (bookbinding). Figure 4 lists tools and supplies for the shop area.

**Figure 3**

*Supplies, Equipment, and Tools for Make-and-Take*

**Expendable Supplies**
poster board
tracing paper
construction paper
graph paper
pizza wheels
clear contact paper
scrap paper
newsprint
workbooks
rubber cement and thinner
white glue
masking tape
duct tape
cloth tape (colored)
transparent tape
picture stickers
magazines (cut up)
old photos
paint: poster and latex
markers: water color,
  permanent, thick and
  fine
crayons
colored pencils
press type
stencils: ditto, mimeo
brads
spinners
dice
library pockets
chips
rings
card decks
game pawns
large beads
popsicle sticks
dowel rods: ¼" and ½"
stick-on dots
"stick-ums"
containers of all sizes
odds and ends
collection of natural
  materials (acorns, shells,
  rocks, etc.)

**Equipment***
paper cutter
thermofax
mimeograph machine
ditto machine
photocopy machine
drymount press
laminator
typewriters
adding machine or
  calculator with tape

**Tools**
scissors
rulers
x-acto knives
compasses
staplers
hole punch
three-hole punch
drawing aids
stamp pads
printing sets
painting aprons

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*Investigate prices, ease of use, staff time required for all equipment.

**Figure 4**

*Tools and Supplies for Shop Area*

**Needed**

heavy, sturdy work table or surface
vice or "C" clamps
cutting board
hammer and nails
hand saw and/or jigsaw
pliers
screwdrivers and screws
drill
utility knives
staple gun
yard/meter sticks/tape measure
glue

**Nice to Have**

grommeter
glue gun
table saw
drill press
band saw
T-square

You must take safety measures: electrical grounding, storage, blade safety, goggles for use with power saws, fire and liability precautions. No power equipment should be used without personal instruction by a knowledgeable staff member, workshop leader, or experienced participant. And you must provide for maintenance: brooms, cleaning equipment, waste bins.

Of course, the carpentry shop (or each workshop) must also provide or sell raw materials such as wood, triwall cardboard, and other supplies necessary to build things. Many teachers' centers collect industrial and household waste supplies to fill their specific needs. Some centers have moved from "scrounging" into setting up substantial recycle areas. Quite a few centers have turned recycling activities into a money-making business. (The article in this book entitled "Programming in a Teachers' Center," by Gail Johnston and Chris Walker, discusses recycling and how to set it up at your center.)

### *"Wet-and-Messy" Space*

The kitchen in your space—or another area provided with a sink and a "messable" floor—can immeasurably increase the creativity potential of your teachers' center. You need a wet-and-messy area for offering workshops in biology, chemistry, and physical investigation, measuring volume and weight, painting, crafts such as bookmaking, batik, and ceramics, potting plants, and the like. If you want to offer these types of creative learning experiences, you must provide a clearly defined space within which participants can be totally involved with messy materials without inhibition. Choose an area near a sink where the floor can be covered or cleaned. In nice weather you may choose to work outside. Provide aprons or smocks, newspapers, rags, cleaning solvents, trash bins, and buckets for clean-up.

### *Students in the Center*

You should make a policy about students' use of the center. Will you make a distinction between students of a certain age and younger children? Do you prefer to accommodate children who come with adults rather than on their own? In which areas can students work, and on what projects? May students come only at certain times? Who is responsible for them? If you ask adults who accompany children to be responsible, are you also willing to accept these adults' methods of discipline (or lack of it)? How will you convey your expectations for students' behavior?

Some centers have set up a thoughtfully stocked children's corner. Signs on the walls suggest activities and explain limits. Other centers mimeograph a handout on the ways in which students can spend their time in the center. Some centers have an adults-only policy except for family workshops planned especially for parents and children to work together on projects.

Student participation can bring life and vitality to the center. If you do encourage students to become regular attendees, you should help them start projects that will sustain their interest. You can trade your instruction for their help—for instance, students can help clean and sort scrounge materials for half an hour in exchange for staff help with cardboard carpentry design. You can expect students to be adept, creative, and helpful.

### "Your Space Is Your Face"

Remember that the development of your space is a process. The space can change. It should change when your staff changes, your participants change, when both staff and users have new ideas; when your programming develops, your services grow or shrink, your funding grows or shrinks; when volunteers or gifts arrive; when an area is no longer used; even when the seasons and weather change. If you make space arrangement decisions, set up areas, and clean and refurbish periodically as a group, more people will be able to find and use the center's resources. There is an important distinction between a staff person "being responsible for" and "owning" an area. When several people agree an area needs changing, keep a log for a while of how it is being used, including frustrations and suggestions for improvement, before you begin to move furniture around. If you are relaxed and comfortable about the gradual and continual development of your space, others will be too.

Finally, resolve that the space you select and furnish be consistent with your beliefs about how adults learn. If you believe that learning develops out of the interaction between learner and teacher and between learner and materials, your design priorities will become clearer. In the way that the space design provides for easy, informal access to staff members, your space should "say" that staff are not skill-givers but facilitators and partners with participants in learning. Because the space makes it permissible for participants to try something new, experiment, make mistakes, and work out their own ideas, the space should say that the teachers' center is a place for teachers to learn not just by hearing and reading, but by doing.

## Note

[1] "Proceedings of Workparty #2, St. Louis, June 1977" (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1977).

# PROGRAMMING IN A TEACHERS' CENTER

*Gail Johnston and Christine Walker*

A teachers' center justifies its existence through the programs it offers. Even the most dedicated staff, the largest grant, the most well-equipped and colorful facility, cannot sustain a center long if the programs do not attract teachers. Quality programs do not just happen, but are the result of a many-faceted and deliberate process of program development. The parts of the process are

- identifying needs and resources
- establishing priorities
- designing/implementing
- evaluating/documenting
- interrelating
- envisioning/dreaming.

We've found these parts work best when they are viewed not as sequential steps but as essential and compatible elements that merge to form a dynamic and complete process. Looking back on our experience in the Learning Exchange in Kansas City, we see that as we were identifying needs and resources, we were also dreaming and evaluating and implementing. And the process continues.

We are devoting the first part of this article to a general discussion of program development in a teachers' center. In the second part we discuss specific programs typical of the Learning Exchange and of the Teacher Curriculum Work Center in Chicago and the Learning Center in St. Louis, whose staff helped us plan this article. The programs in all of our centers have grown out of several factors in combination: the interests and needs of the communities served by our centers, the philosophy of each center, and the instructional talent and teaching resources available to each center. Each of our centers has its own essence. We hope that this sharing of our experience helps readers find their own essence in their teachers' center.

# BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

## I. Parts of the Process

Underlying the entire process of program development is participants' commitment and energy. A teachers' center program may grow out of a direct but casual request by a visitor in the center, or from the analysis of a widespread, formal needs assessment. A program may express the need of an individual teacher or group of teachers, the interest or intuition of a staff member, or a community issue. Programs that start almost imperceptibly—as "just an idea" or "I wish we had . . . " remarks—can blossom into far-reaching, high-impact realities. The enthusiasm and interest generated by the people initially involved in such programs must be regenerated as the venture grows. Ideally, fresh enthusiasm arises in the people who participate first and they then become leaders. Programs that have been started small by people with commitment, and that have required those people to stretch their imaginations and skills, have built the reputation of our teachers' centers.

Program development requires

- a listening ear
- a perceptive eye
- a sense of the future
- an ability to see interrelationships
- an understanding of budgets, facts, and figures
- a willingness to modify or adapt an idea
- objectivity
- intuition and the ability to trust it
- ability to work through interpersonal problems in a group with a common goal.

One person, often the center's director or program coordinator, ideally possesses all these attributes. But it is more practical to plan so that everyone involved in the program development process—leaders, participants, casual onlookers—can contribute some of these essential human ingredients.

### *Identifying Needs and Finding Resources*

*Need: a physiological or psychological requirement for well-being of the organism.*

*Resource: supply of something to take care of a need.*

We've used a variety of approaches in identifying needs and finding ideas and instructors for programs. A successful teachers' center is more than an organization; it is an expanding network of teachers and others devoted to improving schools, including those who want to take from the center to fill a need and those who are willing to give to the center to express their talent or success. Here are some ways of discovering needs and talents:

- phone survey
- series of potluck dinners
- spontaneous conversations with serious teachers (jot down notes from the conversations)
- getting on the mailing lists of school districts, private schools, libraries, universities, museums, other teachers' centers
- questionnaires
- coffee and lunch in the teachers' lounge
- interviews with teachers, individually or in groups (by subject area or grade level)
- interviews with administrators
- personal contacts, including family, friends, former teachers (again, jot down notes)
- your own experiences and intuition (keep a journal)
- business community contacts
- your board of directors
- newspapers, books, magazines, television
- visits to classrooms
- a formal advisory council of teachers.

We value informal ways of gathering information as much as highly structured techniques. Both open dialogues and formal questionnaires are valid means of gathering information. We have found that formal methods are needed to organize information gathered informally: Keep card files, organized by topic, of names of people requesting services, and names of people available to be instructors or consultants. Train staff to keep a running tally on needs and problems they hear expressed frequently and informally. Before launching a deliberate formal survey or questionnaire, we try to be clear about why we want the information. The survey is not worth our (and respondents') effort unless we *need* it to initiate, evaluate, or stop action. Precise questions help respondents make precise answers. (A question can be precise and still be open-ended.) The very act of questioning, whether formal or informal, conveys information about the center to respondents. We try to make sure that the way we gather information conveys our true identity.

## BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

*Contacts! Contacts! Contacts!* Start with the people most familiar to you. Among the school community and the particular schools you will serve, whom do you know whose ideas and expertise will enrich the center's talent pool? Fill out a matrix similar to the one shown in Figure 1. At the top of each column, list a category of people whose talents you'd like to use in the center. At the left, list the school districts, communities, or areas you want to serve. Begin to fill out the matrix. Add to it as your personal contacts grow. Be sure to try to include people from all the ethnic and economic groups represented in the district or area served by the center. You may be surprised at the broad base of potential interest in the center and at the wealth of untapped personal resources at your fingertips. Do not neglect people who you know have a lot to share but lack experience in teaching adults. Recruit them by promising to help them develop their capability.

*Learning to State the Problem.* From time to time we all have difficulty telling someone else what we want—verbalizing "what the matter is." Expressing what we are dissatisfied with is the necessary beginning to solving any problem. A teachers' center must first and foremost be a place for teachers to find help in articulating their problems, verbalizing what they want and need. A sensitive teachers' center staff can guide teachers in defining their own problems and working toward solving them.

Sometimes a teacher needs only a listening ear. Once the frustration is aired, the teacher feels relieved and invigorated. Sometimes the need is for a sympathetic listener who can help formulate a plan of action. Sometimes the need is for the staff person to help the teacher examine recent experience for some positive patterns from which solutions to the problem might arise. Frequently the expressed need is shared by other teachers, who may join the program development process.

The surface statements of teachers' needs, especially those checked off on questionnaires, are not always the real problems. Even a superbly presented workshop may fail if it addresses an ineptly, inaccurately, or incompletely stated problem. Any one consultation by a staff member about individual problems of a teacher may never materialize into a formal program in the center, but over time the staff's multiple, completely and accurately phrased problem statements will produce a workshop schedule and service offerings that are on target.

**Figure 1**

*Matrix for Identifying Talent Pool*

| | | Elementary Teachers | Secondary Teachers | Administrators | Parents | Business People | Community Organization Members |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Middletown School District | North | Linda Jones | | | | Michael Hunt | Jane Perry |
| | East | | Ruth Platt<br>Esther Wong | Ella Martin | Steve Kaplan | | |
| | West | | | | Cathy Smith | | |
| | South | | | | | | |
| | State | Jim Kelly<br>Ann Lewis | | | | | |
| | Regional | | Tom Brown | | | Amalia Diaz | |
| | National | | | | | | Georgia Scott |

### *Establishing Priorities*

*Priority: a preferential rating.*

Staff memberes of new, idealistic organizations are prone to a recurring and sometimes fatal disease called "burnout," which is caused by attempting too much too soon or taking off in one direction and finding ten more possible avenues of action, all related to the organization's goals. Many teachers' centers face the problem of "over-choice." There are more ideas for programs than can realistically be followed through by a small staff and limited resources. Without stifling the generation of new ideas, a teachers' center must find ways to establish priorities for programs, based upon the center's goals, the staff and resources available, and the expressed needs of the center's participants.

Some choices appear simple but may have hidden and far-reaching implications. Often there isn't time to uncover those implications before the decision has to be made. But when there is time to think about the far-reaching impact of choices about programs, you should question yourself searchingly. We've listed questions that we have asked ourselves, or in retrospect should have asked ourselves.

- What are your center's goals? (It helps to begin any discussion of priorities with a restatement of goals to make sure that discussion focuses initially and literally on the long-term reason for developing a particular program.)
- Is the need expressed consistent with your center's goals?
- How often, in how many ways, and by whom have you heard this need expressed?
- Is any other organization in your district or community attempting to meet this need?
- If so, can you work together?
- Do you have the time, money, and materials available to build a *quality* program to meet this need?
- Who other than your staff members might be interested in developing this program with you? (New energy guards against burnout.)
- Is the commitment to the program definite and potentially long-lasting? (This includes both your commitment and that of your sponsors and participants.)

Take time to speculate on the ramifications of designing, offering, and maintaining the new program. Consult with everyone who might offer new information. Take notes. Build a resource file of information about the program topic. Chart the relationships of the new program with existing programs. If you are considering two programs to meet two different needs, look at ways those needs are related. Give each program a preferential rating according to your center's goals. (A rating according to goals does not have to take into account all the limitations imposed by lack of resources.) Be idealistic. Look first at what you hope to accomplish, then temper that with what you believe is within your power to do.

*How to Say "No."* Saying "no" may mean the difference between spreading your money and staff resources too thin, or building a few quality programs. If you find you are saying no often to the same type of request, it may be time to consider finding a way to answer that request by developing a new program or adapting an existing program. If you find that saying no and meaning it is difficult, reassure yourself and others about the reason you are saying no. The simple explanation "we don't have the staff to handle that right now" may bring volunteers to your door. Saying no, but offering an alternative if you know of one, builds your reputation as a "resource" center.

If you say no this way people will not feel bad. They will feel bad if you say "That's a good idea, why don't we try that" and then keep them hanging.

## *Designing and Implementing*

*Design: to conceive or execute a scheme or plan.*

*Implement: to give practical effect to; to insure actual fulfillment by concrete measures.*

You know there is a real need. The need is consistent with your center's goals. You want to commit time, energy, and resources to developing a program to meet this need. The potential program is a priority for your center. You are ready to take action. How do you begin?

Begin by writing down your objectives for the program. *Why* do it? Then consider all aspects of the program.

- *Who*? Who participates in the program and who facilitates?
- *When*? Project a time frame. How long will it take to plan, carry out, and evaluate this program?
- *Where*? Write down the places in which the program will take shape.
- *How*? State all possible techniques for carrying out the objectives.

As you pose the questions "Who, When, Where, How?" you will find you know many of the answers. Record what you know, using the format in Figure 2. Take time to brainstorm about possibilities for the unknown spaces. Be careful not to censor someone's far-out scheme. Brainstorming is a way of coming up with the best ideas *eventually*. An idea's potential is not just a matter of whether it can be made concrete but also a matter of whether it leads to other ideas.

Figure 2 shows the formatting of ideas for a program developed by the Learning Exchange and a neighborhood coalition involving two schools, 20 teachers, and two principals as well as representatives of the Learning Exchange and the neighborhood coalition. The original request had been for a workshop after school to help teachers learn to use subject area learning centers in their classrooms. The brainstorming session expanded their vision of the possible program. First we stated the "Why?"—a purpose that represented a focusing of the original request.

In the example given below, the brainstorming produced several options the principals, teachers, and staff had never seriously considered. The idea of videotaping several learning centers being used in other classrooms could have had valuable and far-reaching potential for this program and for others. Looking at options other than the school or the teachers' center as a location for the program brought forth the idea of teachers visiting in other teachers' classrooms as a built-in follow-up to a workshop or a series of workshops.

**Figure 2**

*Format for Developing Ideas for a Program*

| | WHO? | | WHEN? | | | WHERE? | HOW? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Participants* | *Facilitators* | | | | | |
| **Knowns** | 20 teachers<br>2 schools<br>2 principals | Harriet<br>Bill<br>Connie<br>Linda<br>Learning Exchange staff | Oct.<br>Plan | Jan.<br>Feb.<br>Mar.<br>Implement | April<br>Evaluate | Learning Exchange<br>Troost School<br>Nelson School | Inservice workshops<br>Classroom consultation |
| **Unknowns—What Could Happen?** | Parents<br>Students<br>Janitor | Other classroom teachers<br>Sue—Learning Center staff | Next year<br>Summer | | | Other schools<br>City | Mobile unit visiting schools<br>Videotapes<br>Release time for teachers<br>Group raps |

Once the many options were defined, the principal, teachers, and teachers' center staff had to look at the limitations of time, money, resources, and staff. But the brainstorming had stretched the thinking of those involved and resulted in the original workshop concept being expanded to include two after-school workshops, one at the teachers' center and one at the school, a follow-up discussion session, individual consultation with each teacher by center staff members, and a half day of release time for each teacher to visit another school to observe learning centers in action.

## *Documenting and Evaluating*

> *Document: to provide with factual or substantial support for statements made or a hypothesis proposed.*
>
> *Evaluate: to determine the significance or worth by careful appraisal and study.*

For many of us the word "document" conjures up images of stiff white paper with impressive black lettering and an official-looking seal: the final proof of word or deed. But documenting has a valuable place at the beginning and middle of a process as well as at its end. Scrupulous maintenance and collection of records or documents of your work as you go provides you with tools to redesign as you proceed, illustrate your process to others, give yourself reminders, prove your points, and assess the entire process after the program has been carried out and time has given you a measure of objectivity.

Although its most common purpose is to show others the effects of your work, evaluation should also be useful to you as a predictor of future action. Evaluation should not be left until the end of the program. It should be incorporated into the program development from the start. Both documentation and evaluation should tell not only what happened but how and why it happened.

Here are some forms of evaluation and documentation that we have used:

- teachers' feedback through casual conversation
- participants' evaluation forms
- staff's informal notes or journals
- staff's formal reports
- outside observers' reports
- videotapes and audiotapes
- photographs and slides
- testimonial letters from participants

If several kinds of documentation and sources of evaluative opinion are used, multiple aspects of the program and many perspectives upon it can be combined into one comprehensive reflection.

If you have ever kept a diary or journal, your child's baby book, written long letters home about travel or new adventure, collected portfolios of children's work throughout a school year, or kept a running record of expenditures, calories, phone calls, or mileage, you've had basic training in documentation.

The most elementary skill of the evaluator is counting—numbers of participants, numbers of "contact hours," numbers of students reached by participants, and so forth. But numbers may not be very impressive unless they are placed in a context.

An exercise to help you plan your documentation and evaluation is to write down all the things you would like to know about the people who walk into your center. Ask yourself why you want this information and how you will use it. Then think of various ways to gather the information you decide you need. Some ways we've tried:

- sign-in sheets with participant's name, address, school, phone, purpose of visit.
- file-card box with a permanent card for each participant, on which he or she records the date and occasion or purpose at the time of every visit.
- photographing everything that's happening in the center at a particular time, several different times, or same time over intervals of weeks or months.
- holding informal conversations with visitors to the center about their impressions, recording the conversations in journals, and discussing them in a staff meeting.

The most essential kind of evaluation is commentaries from participants. Others whose opinions might be sought are the program instructor or facilitator and casual onlookers. Evaluation from only one participant or just a few is not objective because everyone has perceptual filters that affect judgment. Objectivity is achieved as you gain relatively large numbers of evaluative reports. One of the main inhibitors to objective assessment is reluctance to hurt other people's feelings. Thus evaluation should be structured so that participants can state their opinions frankly while minimizing personal references. The evaluation process should not be left until the end of the program. Participants should be asked to write their expectations for the program at its beginning. This procedure will reduce the possibility of frustration or disappointment at the end and will also provide an impersonal format in which the final assessment can be stated; for example, "In what way were your opening expectations met or not met?"

Non-participant observers may be more objective than participants. You can select knowledgeable and perceptive people to watch the proceedings or some especially significant portion of the program and make a written report of their impressions. You can structure their report by giving them a checklist or questionnaire with which to look at specific aspects of the program. You may want to brief observers on the purposes of the program, the handicaps you're working against, and the results you seek, or you may simply want them to approach the assignment cold and tell you frankly what they see.

### *Interrelating*

*Inter: prefix meaning mutual or reciprocal.*

*Relate: to connect or bring into relation.*

The center's image is projected by its overall program. The image will be harmonious and literally attractive, or dissonant and unappealing, depending on how well various service components of the center hang together, nourish each other, and interrelate. Your image will also depend on whether your individual workshops and courses viewed as a whole compose a picture of a comprehensive, thoughtful, "together" enterprise. Being amiable, supportive, individually creative people is not enough to make an impact on a school scene that is characterized by divisiveness and fragmentation. Staff members and their efforts—that is, the center's program—must together demonstrate interconnectedness, wholeness, coherence, and thus economy of effort and maximization of effect.

Make a diagram of each program you envision in your center. Think of all the ways they might connect with each other: how they could share staff time, monies, materials; whether they compete for use of your space; how they can be jointly advertised; how one program might draw participants for another (or detract from another). Whenever you plan to add programs, consider how the addition will affect existing programs.

### *Envisioning and Dreaming*

*Visions: unusual discernments or foresight.*

*Dreams: imaginary visions or a reality suggestive of such a vision.*

Teachers' centers can become a strong force for educational improvement in all kinds of communities in all parts of the nation. Where financial troubles plague a school district, resulting in drastic cutbacks in spending, a teachers' center can be presented not as a dashed hope but as a practical, low-cost answer to problems of how to communicate, motivate, and innovate *with* (not to or for) teachers.

A teachers' center can be conceived as common ground where administrators, community organizers, teachers, and business people meet to discuss the educational problems in their communities. Their collective concern about education, given productive outlet over time in the teachers' center, can spark new attitudes, ideas, and curriculum. In our center, in Kansas City, business people shared their vision with educators, saying, "We need to prepare students to be creative thinkers and problem-solvers. We want to hire people who will be able to make sound economic decisions for the unpredictable future." A pilot program in Economic Education was developed by the Learning Exchange staff in close collaboration with the business community. The program involved teachers and students directly with the business world. Basic economic theory coupled with values clarification approaches laid the foundation for students to learn to make decisions for their lives now and for their futures.

Allow time as you go along to envision the future of your teachers' center, to see how the center relates to your community, to foresee how the center can become a guiding force in the educational community. Start a file of observations, reminders, ideas, and testimonials for your next grant proposal. Watch the trends (but be careful, trends are different from fads) in curriculum, in adult education and college extension, and in federal and state educational policy. What are all the fruitful connections you can see your center making with your school district? With your community? With the local college of education? Seek out the forward-lookers and the present-day organizers in each place. Find out what dreams you have in common and talk about ways you can work together.

Don't define your resources solely in terms of dollars. Define resources as teachers' and citizens' concern for their children's schools, their eagerness to be involved with companions in a worthwhile venture, their hidden talents waiting for a means of expression, their spendthriftness with their own time when the cause is just—and fun. That's all visionary, but visions fuel inventions, and visionaries, if they are willing to invent and to invest their skills and ideas, become the leaders that more earthbound types admire and follow.

## II. Specific Programs in a Teachers' Center

### *Drop-In Hours*

*Drop in: pay a casual visit.*

The drop-in or open-hours program at the teachers' center offers space, materials, ideas, and staff assistance to an individual visitor who comes without an appointment and without intending to take part in an organized workshop, seminar, or class. Whether the individual comes to buy a book, build a triwall table, research an idea, cry on a shoulder, share a success, or just be in a supportive environment with other teachers, the space must be structured so that teachers will see themselves as learners. The drop-in area should be a model of an active, learner-responsive educational setting, in which the teacher sees parallels to an informal, learner-responsive schoolroom.

A first-time visitor to the center needs a thorough orientation on how to use the center: where to find things, whom to ask for help, how much things cost, how to use duplicating machines or shop equipment, and generally how to make oneself at home in the place. Having someone—staff or volunteer—assigned to greet newcomers and make sure they feel welcome and at home may make the difference between the visitor becoming a participant or a one-time observer. The teachers' center can be a laboratory for investigating, a library for study, a shop for construction, a classroom for instruction, a lounge for companionship and relaxation. How can you make visitors familiar with all aspects of your setting so that they can choose what use to make of it?

Here are some things you should think about:

- How much staff time and money will be devoted to maintaining and developing your space for informal browsing, relaxing, uninstructed working? Is this program a high priority?
- How do participants find out about your drop-in program and hours?
- What are your expectations of the drop-in participant? How much self-help, how much responsibility for putting away and tidying?
- What are your expectations of groups that visit?
- What is available and not available to the drop-in?
- How can you be sure visitors will know how to use your equipment?
- How will you know who has been to the center and what involvement they've had with the space, staff, and materials?

We have found the following methods helpful in orienting first-time visitors:

- Written instructions posted at every work area, and in the library, store, coffee corner, etc.
- Personal greeting and short introductory tour.
- Handout sheets telling about the center's purposes and offerings.

If your center has a policy of selling memberships, you can offer as an inducement special privileges in the shop, library, recycle area, and store.

### *Workshops*

> *Workshop: a seminar emphasizing free discussion, exchange of ideas, and practical methods, skills and principles that is given mainly for adults already employed in the field.*

"Workshop" has become such a well-worn word that its meaning is about used up, especially for teachers, whose mailboxes and school bulletin boards announce here a workshop to try a new skill, there a workshop to change your life. The meaning "workshop" has for us is: *a short learning experience that allows participants to admit to being beginners and to learn by doing*. A workshop in a teachers' center is subject to the same dangers of inflated advertising, unrealistic expectations by participants, inept presentation by leaders, inappropriate setting, ill-designed materials, or just plain bad luck as a workshop sponsored by any other organization. However, you always reduce the discrepancy between promise of a worthwhile inservice experience and performance when you bring teachers into the workshop planning process.

The design process we have already described for the center's overall program development can be used for planning a single workshop. At every stage, teachers and center staff can work together, beginning with the specification of reasons for having the workshop.

*Why?* Some reasons for presenting workshops might be:

- to study and try out a new curriculum series and adapt it to teachers' individual classrooms.
- to teach a new art form, craft, or science exploration so that teachers learn to use unfamiliar materials and can in turn present an active, exploratory experience to their students.
- to teach a topic like that described above simply for participants' stimulation, challenge, enrichment, or reminder of what it feels like to be a beginner and a learner.
- to make learning materials or equipment for the classroom.

- to work toward a school staff's cohesion.
- to present new required subject matter.

Whether the impetus for the workshop comes from teachers, the center's staff, or someone else, it is important to define the workshop objective simply and clearly at first. Compare the workshop objectives with your center's overall objectives. Could the request for the workshop be better met elsewhere?

*What?* What is the subject matter: content, concept, process, skill? Is it simple, complex? New, old, used-up, ever fresh, new wrinkle, old tried-and-true standby? Solid or frilly, protein or empty calories? Is the subject accessible to beginners? To participants at differing levels of accomplishment? Does it lend itself to learning by doing?

*Who?* Who are the appropriate target audience for this subject? How many people are in the audience? Do they need and want to learn the subject? How much do they already know? Who will be the leader or facilitator? Is the leader's style of instruction in accordance with your center's style? With participant's needs? Who will set up and gather materials, help out during the workshop, and clean up? Who will pre-register participants?

*When?* What is the optimum date and time for this workshop? Are there competing events on the center's calendar or other organizations' calendar? Will your desired audience come at this time? How long will the workshop last? Will it contain more than one session? How much time does each portion of the content require? Will there be time at the start for a thorough introduction to the center and airing of expectations about the workshop? Will there be time for exchanging ideas and evaluating before everyone leaves?

*Where?* What space suits this type of workshop? How will the space influence movement and interaction? Will it foster learning by doing and a relaxed, unpressured attitude among leader and participants? Is there a place more fitting for the workshop than your center? For example, if the workshop is on "Printmaking from Found Materials," can the workshop be held where the materials may be found—outside in a park or in a cemetery? How will the workshop influence or be influenced by nearby activities? How will noise levels or casual onlookers affect the participants' concentration and comfort?

*How?* How will you attract participants? Clever titles are fun, but straightforward ones often tell the story better. Publicity or preview sheets sent to participants create the atmosphere for the workshop ahead of time. They should convey a clear idea of your purposes and information about your provisioning for the workshop.

How can you structure the time so that participants can absorb enough information and experience to take back to the classroom and still gain an overview and theoretical grounding that feeds their continuing reflection or experimentation? How will you divide time between listening and trying out? Between listening and discussing? If your workshop involves group discussion, how many groups do you need, how many discussion leaders, what kind of spaces for meetings, how much time for groups to pool conclusions? If participants are going to construct materials, how much time will it take for them to feel comfortable with and understand their task and the equipment they will use? How will you facilitate this process and clarify and embellish the leader's instructions?

Evaluating is part of the learning experience of the workshop. Give the participants a chance to place a value on the workshop, both for their own satisfaction and for your evaluation. A final rap session is useful for this purpose, as are forms that can be filled out on the spot or mailed back later. Give the workshop leader a chance to assess the experience, especially your planning and support. What could be done differently next time? What worked well and should be shared?

Follow-up: The staff member responsible for the workshop should report its results to other staff members, so as to initiate a new phase of program development. Can the ideas, products, and experiences generated in this workshop be followed through to another step? Will they make a display for the center? Can interested participants be persuaded to lead another session? Can you follow with plans for a more in-depth workshop? Would participants appreciate staff follow-up to the workshop in their classrooms? Always look for avenues for continuing interest. This is your best insurance of holding your participants' interest and getting their deeper involvement.

### *College Credit Courses*

> *Course: a complete, progressive series of studies necessary for graduation, for a degree, etc.*

The line between a course and a workshop may be imperceptible, but a course probably lasts longer, incorporating more sessions, and it probably—though not necessarily—purveys more theories than hands-on experience. A course usually requires the student to produce some evidence of accomplishment worthy of the college's award of credit. How can a center decide whether to offer college or university courses for credit? What can you offer teachers that the local campus cannot? A teachers' center should contribute more to the course than just the setting. Will the course content be different at the center than it would be in the traditional college setting? Will the format—the activities and interrelationships among students—be in keeping with the center's goals and style? Find out whether the university will accredit courses given by your staff members, expert teachers, or others not on the faculty. From which of your local colleges or universities are teachers likely to seek graduate credit? What are the school district's requirements or inducements for graduate courses? Are most of your clientele already at top pay scale so that graduate credit really is not an inducement for many? The fee for the course must cover the college's tuition cost plus your costs. Can you offer the college opportunities for teaching preservice college students in exchange for low-cost credit-bearing courses given in your center by the college faculty?

The college credit course given at your center will affect your other programs. There could be a conflict of interests in the space used, the time allotted, and the staff energies needed to supervise this program along with your own. On the other hand, a college course held in your center could positively influence your environment, your curriculum ideas, your other workshop offerings, and your staff expertise. The enthusiasm generated in a good course will spill over into other programs at your center. The physical presence of groups of teachers in the center for extended periods of time will make your space well-used and well-known. The opportunities for continuing follow-up with the participants after the course is over are great.

The Economic Education program at the Learning Exchange is an example of this. A three-hour graduate course in the Education Department at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, offers two resource staff members from the center to work with the teachers after the course is over, visiting their classrooms, talking on the phone and meeting after school, as the teachers implement the concepts and methods taught in the course. The continued contact with the Learning Exchange makes the course more valuable for the teachers and gives the center continual commentary and evaluation concerning the quality of the course, as well as ways that the center can best provide ongoing assistance to teachers. The materials that the teachers develop and implement in their classrooms are collected into books and displayed at the center for dissemination to other teachers.

It takes time to establish the good working relationship with the college sponsor of credit courses, such as the Economic Education course, which capitalize on the strengths of both the faculty and the teachers' center. Start by introducing yourself to faculty members who will be supportive of your center's philosophy and will appreciate your environment. A teachers' center should be offering teachers opportunity and guidance in studying their own hypotheses and comparing their experience with the accumulated wisdom of pedagogy. Teachers also want opportunities to study new or advance subject matter so that they can freshen their curriculum. Scholars and practitioners should co-exist in a teachers' center.

### *Counseling and Advising*

> Counsel: a mutual exchange of ideas and opinions; discussion, deliberation; advice resulting from such an exchange.

Most teachers' centers provide a counseling service to regular participants. It may be entirely informal—a teacher drops in to the center and sits down over a cup of coffee with a staff member to discuss the happenings of the day. Or it may be structured so that an individual teacher receives a set number of hours per semester of counseling with a particular staff member on a topic of mutual concern, such as setting up classroom learning centers, using simulation games in the classroom, or interrelating the arts with other subjects. The counseling may take place in the center or in the teacher's classroom during school, after school, or both. Many teachers' centers refer to counseling as *advising*.

As the center's space is its face, the mutual exchange of ideas that occurs in formal or informal counseling and advising is the center's heart and soul. From this activity—this respecting and responding stance towards teachers—grow new program ideas, new resources of human energy, and a mutual trust, a re-commitment to the beliefs that laid the foundation for the center.

Evidence is mounting that such personalized support for teachers, based on mutual trust and respect and reaching into the classroom, is the most effective of all "change agent" strategies. While informal counseling or advising should be intrinsic in all the staff's work, a formal counseling program, especially one that extends to participants' school and classrooms, is an expensive service. Can other center programs finance the counseling your center does? Is it provided in your basic budget? Can you find a sponsor to subsidize this service? You will need to devise ways to keep track of the amount of time staff spends and document the results.

The teachers' center staff member entering a center participant's classroom as a counselor or advisor is tempted to "do" for the teacher. If the teacher seems harried or floundering, helping out may make the advisor feel good. But the counselor can be most helpful by facilitating the teacher's own learning and doing. Proceed with caring but with caution. Why did you come into the classroom in the first place? What was the teacher's specific request? Are you there as an expert, a resource, an observer, or a helper? Be sure of your expectations and those of the teacher. Keep re-checking them as you keep lines of communication open. How will your presence affect the students' and the teachers' interactions? Take time to observe carefully the teacher's style, so you can find positive elements to build on, rather than imposing your style as a corrective. Decide how you might be able to help and talk it over with the teacher. Decide together how you will evaluate progress as you go and how you will decide if you want to continue.

Discussions of in-classroom advisory and counseling services by teachers' center staff are presented in two articles in this book, "An Advisor at Work" by Maja Apelman, and "What Our Hearts Required: A Recollection of Beginnings" by Georgia Delano, Stanley Chu, and James Neujahr, and in the Teachers' Centers Exchange's forthcoming Occasional Paper No. 5.

### *Resource and Recycle Area*

*Resource: source of supply, support, or aid; especially one held in reserve.*

*Recycle: to pass through or undergo again; as for further treatment, change, use.*

The tangible things your center offers to teachers and the manner of offering them are part of your programming. A teachers' center does not calculate its personnel resources only in terms of the budget for instructional staff, but also in terms of talents and experiences freely exchanged among center participants and friends. Similarly, instructional materials used in the center and offered by the center need not all be budgeted at purchase prices. Some materials can be donated, scrounged, or recycled from discards into devices for teaching and learning.

*Collecting a Library and Running a Store.* You will find yourself gradually accumulating books, magazines, article reprints, pamphlets, lesson materials and exemplary student work brought in by participants. You can choose to organize and display all of these and make them available for browsing and/or borrowing, or your resource library can exist only for your staff. In deciding whether to make your books and materials collection a program resource, you will have to consider who, if anyone, will be able to check out books and who will be responsible for selecting, ordering, cataloging, displaying, updating, and keeping track of your collection. A center cannot and should not be a miniature public library or compete with the school district's curriculum and media center. But a messy, disorganized, spotty, outdated collection will reflect badly on your staff. Further, your offerings should be selected to express your taste and values, to serve as your staff's professional resource, to provide materials that are hard for your participants to find, and especially to provoke thought on problems that your participants have articulated.

Another resource you may want to offer is a little store where books, learning supplies, and curriculum kits and apparatus are for sale. Again, these materials should be selected to express your judgment, as what you sell may seem to the buyer to speak for your center. Tiptoe into the store business if it seems to make sense as a break-even way of providing service to your participants—offering them sought-after materials in one central place and saving them time, trouble, and money. You will have to keep your supplies adequately stocked and periodically freshened and of course learn to be very canny about pricing items to cover expenses incurred in ordering, purchasing, delivering, displaying, and selling.

*Recycled Materials (Scrounge) Depot.* A prominent feature of many teachers' centers is the recycled materials depot. Whether in a corner, a closet, or a room of its own, "Recycle" is a bank of bins, barrels, and boxes, filled with supplies and objects discarded from homes, businesses, and industries. This ever-changing, curious-looking stock ranges from householders' empty peanut butter jars to a business's discarded stationery to an industry's obsolete thingamabobs. When ingeniously refabricated, these items become provocative and productive classroom materials. The materials you scrounge should speak for themselves, suggesting an educational use by their very make-up—their cut-ability, punchability, malleability, constructability, glue-ability, and storage or sorting capacity. Household, commercial, and industrial throwaways do not transform themselves into curriculum learning tools, games, toys, art projects, or science apparatus, but they hold possibilities waiting to be released by the exploratory mind and deft hand. Use purchased items as patterns. Clip or copy ideas from books. Create from your imagination. Ask thrifty and inventive housewives, teachers, artists, do-it-yourselfers, mechanics, environmentalists specializing in solid waste management, and other improvisers for their ideas on what to scrounge. Read

*Recyclopedia* by Robin Simons[1] for an indispensable compendium of what you can make from scrounge (and how). Decide what to collect from two viewpoints: (1) What do teachers really need that they can't afford: what scrap could you make it from? (2) What scrounge easily and attractively presents itself: what tool can you make from it? The products may be sturdy and durable enough to last for years in the classroom, or they may only be the end of a more important means – inventing and problem solving.

A Recycle program allows the adult or child to invent and experiment freely with materials, without fear of failure or of wasting expensive supplies. The learner can focus on the process of inventing and experimenting, not on the product made. Inventing encourages individual thinking and group cooperation, and it develops skills in problem solving that can apply in other situations. There is room for failure in inventing: one can learn as much from something that doesn't work as from something that does.

Rule of thumb for Recycle: Start small and stay flexible, keeping in touch with the needs and likes of your consumers and the availability of useful scrounge. Proceed cautiously. How deeply can you invest your staff in recycling activity? Will Recycle damage your image with people who look on scrounge as junk? See whether your community already has a scrounge center that can provide what you need for teachers to work with in the center and then in classrooms. You can limit Recycle to providing raw materials for workshops in your center and for participants at your workshops to take to their classrooms. Or you can embark on a major supply service to teachers and community people, independent of your workshop program. Several centers that are independently financed depend on Recycle sales for substantial income. Do not even consider a Recycle component unless you have ample storage space and someone on your staff, or available as a dedicated volunteer, with noticeable talent and abounding energy for organization, public relations, and merchandising. This person must have an interest in ideas and in children and must *also* have an interest in junk – the possibilities hidden within mundane, unlovely materials – and a willingness to pick it up, push it around, and organize it.

– *Collecting Recycled Materials.* Personal contacts are your first source of potential raw materials for a Recycle area. Teachers attending workshops, your own family, and friends are sources of stuff and leads to other stuff. Every store your center patronizes probably has something they can donate. The yellow pages are a gold mine of ideas. Ads tell of what the company manufactures and thus suggest what the company throws out. For instance, any company that does die cutting will be throwing out odd shapes of paper, plastic, cork, or rubber. A printing firm will have end cuts of paper; a clothing manufacturer will have fabric scraps, thread spools, buttons. If you are looking for a particular item, call a company and ask for it specifically. If they tell you they don't make or throw out that item, find out what they do throw out. Be sure to tell them whom you represent, emphasizing the words "teachers" and "children." Your polite and to-the-point questioning may yield valuable materials.

From the beginning, keep orderly files. Use a notebook or file card system, cross referenced for name of company and name of item. Keep careful notes of all pertinent information: name of company, all names of persons you have contacted—their official capacity and any special understandings you have with them; address of company and special instructions for making pickups; phone numbers and extensions; descriptions of items available; dates on which pickups have been made; dates you wrote thank-yous. (See Figure 3.) After you make the initial phone contact, follow it up with a short letter on the center's letterhead and include a comprehensive description of center services. If they promised you an immediate pickup, make it as scheduled. Being late or postponing is a sure way to lose their good will. If they promised to keep you in mind and call you back, your follow-up note plus a follow-up phone call will let them know you are serious and very much want their donation. Make friends with the people with whom you make phone appointments and who deliver the stuff to you. The president may authorize the initial pickup, but the secretary and dock manager are the ones who will make it possible for you to continue. You might ask to leave a large box or barrel marked with your center's name so they can collect stuff for your regular pickup.

Once a year may be often enough to thank some contributors; after each pickup may be more appropriate for others, especially if they went to a lot of trouble to help you. If you have a non-profit tax exempt number always include it in your correspondence. Some donors appreciate a follow-up letter that includes pictures of the ways you've used their donations or copies of news articles showing teachers working with their materials.

Business firms will give you materials only if you make it easy for them. They will not want many phone calls. Never send teachers directly to their doors. Frequently you must protect a source and politely decline to tell your Recycle clientele if they ask where they can go to get some. Your center becomes a broker for companies donating materials: you provide the teacher a service and the convenience of one-stop shopping, you protect the company from being badgered by teachers and provide a free waste collection service.

Some Recycle programs have a pickup vehicle. This is ideal. However, it is possible to operate using staff members' personal cars and occasionally a

## Figure 3

*Recycle Checklist*

**Name of company or donor:**

**Contact person:**

**Phone:**

**Address:** **Zip:**

**Best pickup times:**

**Pickup tips:**

**Items available:**

**Other information:**

| Date of pickup | Items picked up | Acknowledgment sent ✓ |
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rented truck. Check your center's liability and the insurance coverage of the staff's cars before letting anyone make pickups. Compensate the car lender for gas mileage and wear and tear. If the Recycle program is to be a major money generator or to provide large quantities of free materials for teachers, owning a van or truck is a necessity, as is an official "scrounger" who knows the scrounge sources and the routes. Before making any pickup, compute the mileage, salary and/or vehicle rental cost and compare it with the value of the pickup to your center. Whenever possible, consolidate pickups, scheduling several to be made in the same area on the same day along an economical route.

—*Storing and Marketing*. You will be able to scrounge storage units or build them very cheaply if you have construction-wise volunteers at hand. Heavy cardboard tubes, fiber barrels, crates, can be stacked and bolted together, and shelving can be made from recycled or warped 2 x 4's. Recycle storage should be designed with these things in mind:

- easy access for those using or purchasing;
- expedience in restocking the bins or shelves as they run low;
- appearance, which enhances marketability. You must also avoid having the center look junky, for that takes away from your professionalism.
- pricing methods that allow quick changes and are clearly understood. For recycled materials the law of supply and demand holds. What sold for 5c each when there were 1,000 may sell for 25c each when only 50 are left.
- correlation of materials with ideas for educational use. Display the actual product that can be made and/or idea sheets, instructions of how to make items, or photos.
- interchangeable storage units to accommodate the changing sizes and quantities of items you will be stocking.

Copy some of the marketing techniques of supermarkets and other stores. Use shopping bags recycled from your market, shopping carts, rolling ladders, display signs, special purchases and discounts, freebies, and special packaging. Many centers promote the "shopping bag special"—one set price for a bagful of any materials.

—*To Sell or Not to Sell?* What does it cost you to run Recycle in salaries, stationery, vehicle costs, advertising, space and light, and janitorial service? Can these costs be subsidized or recovered by a grant or by other income sources? Do you need to, or would you like to, rely on Recycle to generate money for other center activities? What are your participants/consumers willing to pay for the scrounge? Will you accept their scrounge in trade? Can you offer materials for sale and still feel you are offering a service? Check prices in the local dime store or teacher store. Chances are you can at least recoup costs and still offer teachers good deals on materials. Try to calculate the approximate worth of the Recycle materials you use in workshops or give away to teachers and make this figure known to your sponsors and school district.

*—Interrelating Recycle with Other Programs.* However you choose to collect, store, manage, sell, or give away recycled materials at your center, you'll soon find that Recycle has crept into all of your center's programs. Recycle may make money for your center, may spread your center's name throughout the community, may attract the attention of local media, and may bring more teachers and parents to your center. It may mushroom into a major program taking staff time and energy and focus away from other programming; it may become your addiction. As your Recycle program grows, it can enhance program, increase participation and income, and simplify your center's life, or it can detract from your educational mission and image and complicate your management. Remember that Recycle *is* a program and like all other programs must be evaluated on the basis of how it accords with your center's principles and helps accomplish your educational goals.

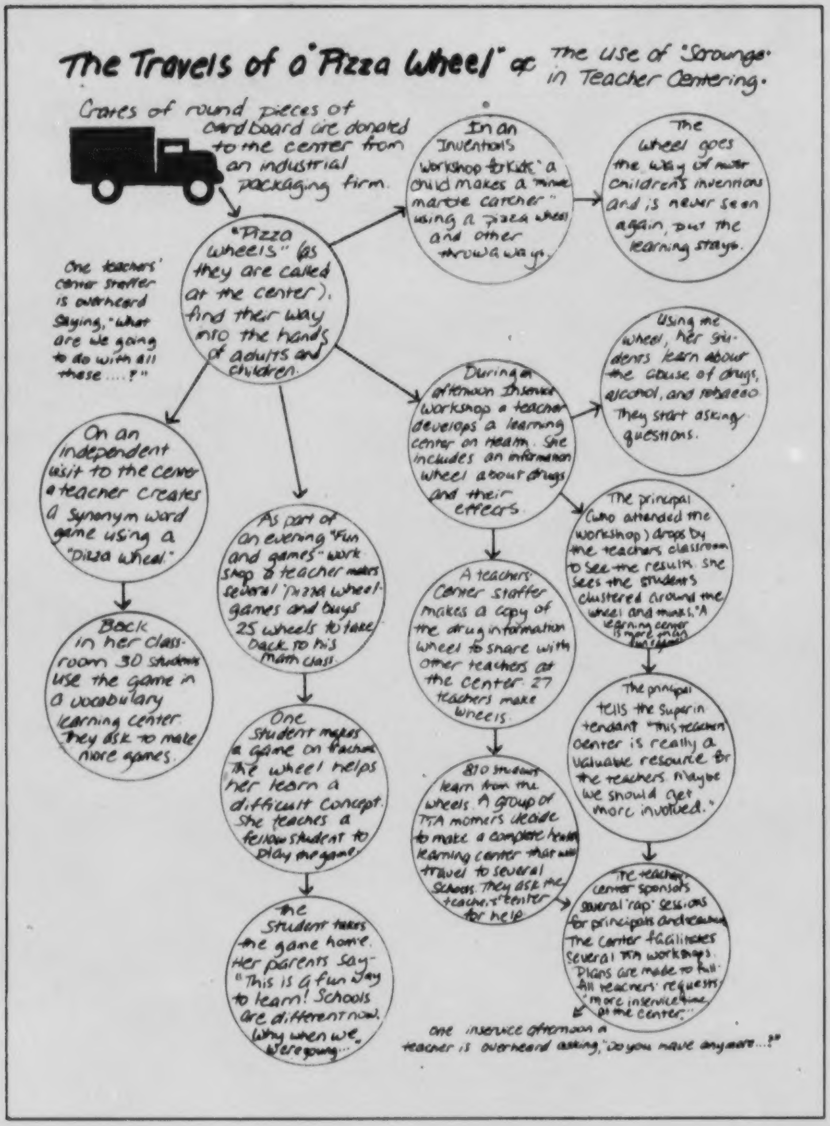
The Recycle flow chart illustration in Figure 3 shows how a simple recycled item, the cardboard pizza wheel, permeated nearly every aspect of our Learning Exchange's program and how for a minimal investment that pizza wheel fostered the Exchange's goals.

## *Extensions*

*Extend: to reach out, surpass, to enlarge in meaning, influence, scope, effect.*

The teachers' center can be a central meeting place, office, and clearinghouse running programs in different formats and in different places. All programs do not have to happen within the four walls of the center during center hours. "Outreach" may connote a staff person going from the center into a teacher's classroom as a counselor/advisor, or it may mean coordinating parents and people from the community working with teachers to hold a "learning fair" on the school grounds. If you anticipate or experience difficulty in spreading the word about your programming or in contacting teachers who can't or won't (yet) make the effort to come into your center, you must design an outreach program.

Figure 3



The Travels of a "Pizza Wheel" or The use of "Scrounge" in Teacher Centering.

Crates of round pieces of cardboard are donated to the center from an industrial packaging firm.

"Pizza wheels" (as they are called at the center), find their way into the hands of adults and children.

One teachers' center staffer is overheard saying, "What are we going to do with all these ....?"

In an "Inventor's Workshop for Kids" a child makes a "mine marble catcher" using a pizza wheel and other throwaways.

The wheel goes the way of most children's inventions and is never seen again, but the learning stays.

On an independent visit to the center a teacher creates a synonym word game using a "pizza wheel."

Back in her classroom 30 students use the game in a vocabulary learning center. They ask to make more games.

As part of an evening "Fun and games" workshop a teacher makes several "pizza wheel" games and buys 25 wheels to take back to his math class.

One student makes a game on fractions. The wheel helps her learn a difficult concept. She teaches a fellow student to play the game.

The student takes the game home. Her parents say- "This is a fun way to learn! Schools are different now. Why when we were young..."

During an afternoon inservice workshop a teacher develops a learning center on health. She includes an information wheel about drugs and their effects.

Using the wheel, her students learn about the abuse of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. They start asking questions.

A teachers' center staffer makes a copy of the drug information wheel to share with other teachers at the center. 27 teachers make wheels.

810 students learn from the wheels. A group of PTA mothers decide to make a complete health learning center that will travel to several schools. They ask the teachers' center for help.

The principal (who attended the workshop) drops by the teachers classroom to see the results. She sees the students clustered around the wheel and muses, "A learning center is more than fun and games."

The principal tells the Superintendant "This teachers' center is really a valuable resource for the teachers. Maybe we should get more involved."

The teachers' center sponsors several "rap" sessions for principals and teachers. The center facilitates several PTA workshops. Plans are made to fill all teachers' requests: "more inservice time at the center."

One inservice afternoon a teacher is overheard asking, "Do you have any more...?"

In our center we reach out in a number of directions and ways. We arrange for a teacher with a problem or interest to visit the classroom of another teacher who has a solution to that problem. We hold a faculty seminar with the staff or a group of the staff and the principal on how to improve that school. We take inservice workshops out to schools, loading up our cars with scrounge materials and prototype designs of curriculum materials for teachers to make. We meet the teachers on their own ground, saving them time getting to the center after school. Away from our center, we are limited in what we can offer the teachers, but we can begin to establish a relationship and introduce teachers to our center's philosophy and program. We can learn about those teachers and discern their needs.

Some centers reach out to parents in PTA meetings, and to children in classrooms, to principals, to community groups. In making a decision about whether to take programs out of the center, the major consideration, after practicalities of cost and convenience, is how accurately you can convey the content and flavor of the center.

If you take a workshop out to a school, what else can happen besides the workshop? A slide show introducing the teachers to your center's learning spaces and materials? A classroom visit or reflective talk with a teacher? A chance to get to know the principal and describe the benefits of the center? Your own deeper understanding of the kind of learning and teaching going on in that school? The more you are physically in the schools and sensitive to their looks, sounds, feelings, human relationships, failings, and successes, the more authentic the program in your center will be.

## Afterword

At a "workparty" for teachers' center staff people from around the nation sponsored by the Teachers' Centers Exchange in June 1977 in St. Louis, program development was a topic for sharing and problem solving by many of our colleagues. Following are some of the ideas and advice they came up with.[2]

A teachers' center is a place of social change. But the center doesn't make the changes. Teachers do by using what they have learned with their students. Is your center a place for teachers to come if they want to expand or enrich their classroom curriculum? Are materials and samples of students' work available? Are there materials that make it easier for people to do what they are already thinking of doing?

A basic philosophical question: does your program grow out of expressed needs of some or of all of the teachers in the district? Some or all of the users of the center? Your own philosophy of learning and education? Are any of these in conflict?

> Basically our center exists because of the need to raise the self-esteem of each person we encounter. This leads us to use teacher-suggested programs, involve teachers and principals in the day-to-day planning of the center's program, and help teachers incorporate work they have done with their students into the center.

You encourage teacher ownership of the center if, when a person suggests a workshop, you ask him or her to do the beginning work of conceptualizing, finding other interested participants, contacting resource people. Then the center staff coordinates and schedules. On suggestion forms you can ask center users to sign up for workshop design or participation (or both). Or you can have a large-group meeting to brainstorm programs and organize a needs assessment. Then a smaller program development committee takes over to carry out details.

> I think program development aimed at skills alone misses the boat. Aim instead at re-sparking teachers' interest in working with kids. The progression is understanding kids first, then learning methods of teaching. The "skills approach" is deadly because it assumes a weakness, a deficiency and then "gives" you the solution. Teachers don't want to be "done with"; they want to be able to create their own lives and their own learning for themselves.

Teachers' centers can expand beyond a curriculum-defined program to include occasional personal growth experiences (for example, "practical parenting" for working parents' groups; any sort of group where people at different points come together to discuss issues and share experiences).

> The typical reward system of inservice increments formerly dictated our expectations for teacher growth and teachers' needs. For the most part, our teachers are disappointed by these old-style inservice programs. The greatest single complaint we hear from teachers is that none of their time is their own. More and more teachers are asking for personal, long-term, sustained support for their own growth.

It is important to think and plan far ahead with a sense of how much you want programming to expand. If programming has grown in a random sort of way, there may need to be a cohesive plan superimposed after the fact and then slowly sustained and used for future planning. Do not take on a project simply because it can bring in revenue. It's easier to define an objective first, get the work started, and then find a way to fund it.

Consider attending part of your district's staff development programs for your staff's own professional growth. What do they have to offer you? How will your presence affect them? What sorts of involvement or relationship do you want to have with district inservice programs and trainers?

If offerings merely reflect the staff's involvement in the topics, a narrow program will result. But if the staff responds to suggestions from center users and is open to very wide possibilities, then programs will mushroom. Still, a balance should be maintained between user-requested programs and staff-initiated ones.

When a school requests a workshop, respond quickly. Does your program allow you to follow through on requests? Is it flexible enough so that you aren't strictly limited to your calendar of events?

Do not sponsor compulsory activities (e.g., a principal bringing his or her entire staff for required inservice) unless during that session you can offer options to the teachers, including working on their own projects.

> Programs need to foster a sense of resourcefulness, competency, self-assurance, independence, and autonomy. In the area of personal growth teachers want to express, feel, write, create, risk with people they know and trust. In the area of skills they want to learn theory and techniques for interacting with children. Their professional growth requires the in-depth pursuit of curriculum first on their own and then with their students. Teachers want to be "alive and in love with life."

## Notes

[1] Robin Simons, *Recyclopedia* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), $7.95 hardback, $3.95 paperback.

[2] See "Proceedings of Workparty #2, St. Louis, June 1977" (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1977).

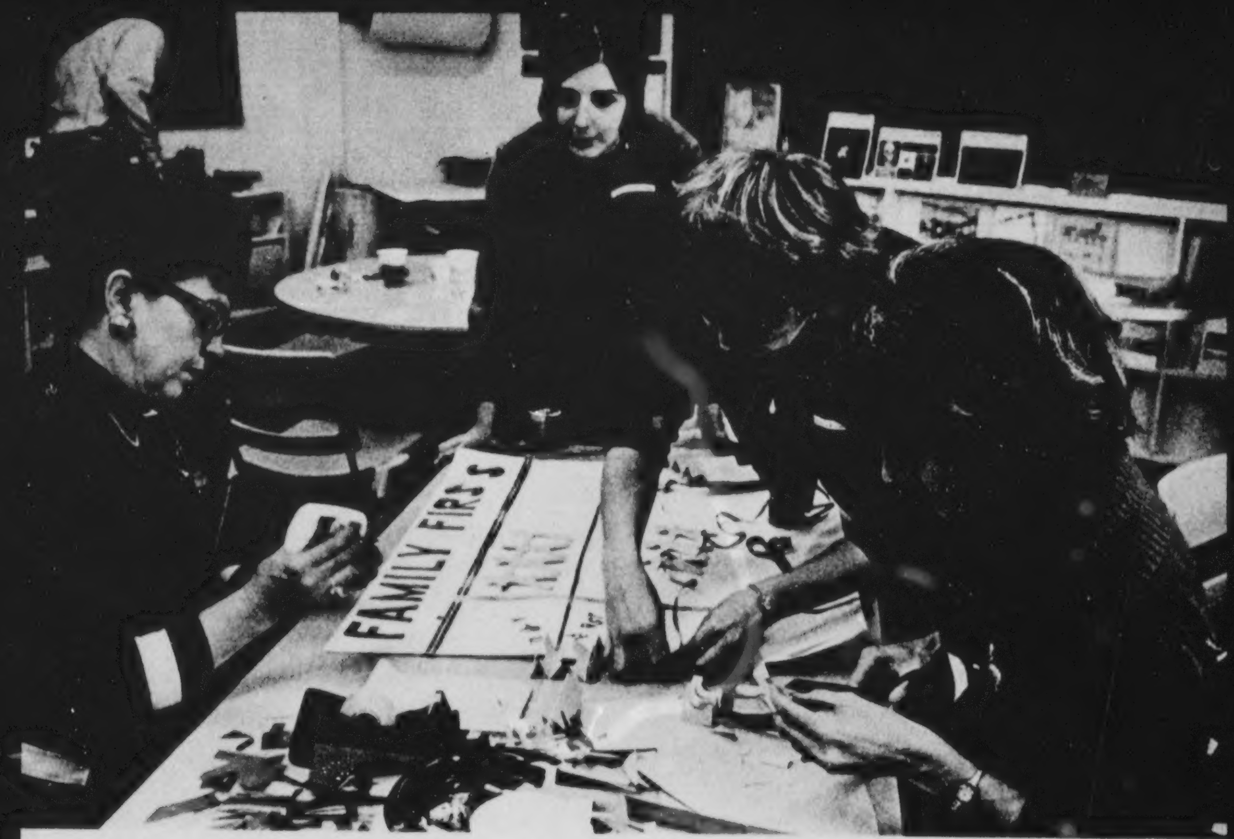

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PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO TSURUTA

# CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL WORKSHOPS

*Peter Martin and Mary Keenan*

The following criteria for successful workshops are based on a preliminary review of evaluation data gathered from workshops conducted thus far by Project RISE (Regional In-Service Education), a teachers' center serving nine rural towns in east central Connecticut.[1] The data require further study before the criteria can be grouped in order of relative importance in contributing to a successful workshop. However, the most important criterion so far appears to be the element of *choice*.

1. *Opportunity for Choice*. If a teacher chooses to participate in a workshop or other activity, it is more likely that the teacher will positively evaluate that experience. Even when participation is mandated but significant alternatives are offered, the element of choice remains strong enough to elicit positive evaluation from teachers.

2. *Content of Workshop*. The more successful workshops appear to be geared toward a narrow grade-level range, a specific content area, or other clearly defined need.

3. *Opportunity for Active Involvement*. Active involvement by teachers—including participation in hands-on experiences, exercises that will later be used with students, and group discussions—is an important element of successful workshops.

4. *The Presenter*. In successful workshops the presenter approaches the subject from a teacher's point of view. The presenter's ability to by dynamic and convey genuine enthusiasm for the subject also plays a role. However, even though the presenter may do an excellent job of presenting the material, some other criteria might determine whether the workshop receives rave reviews or negative evaluation.

5. *Time Allowed*. Successful workshops provide enough time for the experience to be valuable to participants. (Workshops that are not particularly

beneficial are often rated as "too long," and beneficial ones as "too short.") It appears that the optimum length for a workshop varies with the nature of the activity.

6. *Time of Day and Season.* Obviously, workshops that take place when teachers are tired have less chance of success than workshops offered when participants are fresh. Workshops that occur when teachers are pressured with seasonal activities, parent conferences, or during periods of crises in the schools are less likely to be successful (see #8).

7. *Opportunity for Follow-up.* This criterion is related to #5. Some workshops are more successful if there are opportunities for follow-up, either because there was insufficient time at the first session, or because the material requires time for reflection, digestion, or a chance to try activities with students.

8. *The Learning Environment.* The social and psychological environment plays an important role in the success of a workshop. Successful workshops either generate or take place in a low-threat, comfortable setting that offers a degree of "psychological safety" for the teachers. Openness to learning seems to be enhanced when teachers are among peers who share similar concerns, highs and lows, problems and solutions. It is important that during the learning experience there is no fear of being evaluated so that teachers feel free to admit areas of need. Through peer contact teachers can realize that they're not alone in having "short suits" that need strengthening; under such conditions, genuine learning can thrive. (Comments to this effect are often made personally by participating teachers to workshop leaders or RISE staff, but are rarely made on written evaluation forms.)

By way of contrast, it is rare to have a workshop evaluated successful in a school where a crisis or a smoldering problem has produced discontent among the staff. Under such conditions, evaluations might reflect the mood of the teachers rather than the quality of the workshop.

9. *Teacher Involvement in Planning.* Workshops tend to be evaluated more positively by teachers who have taken part in planning the activities. Two apparent reasons for this are: (a) The workshop is more likely to reflect and meet the needs of a teacher who has helped structure the activities; and (b) A teacher who has helped plan a workshop is likely to have a greater sense of "ego involvement" —an investment in the success of the program—and will, therefore, look for its more positive aspects.

10. *Leaving the Workshop with a Finished Product.* Many workshops receive favorable evaluation if teachers leave with a finished product that is ready for classroom use, for example, a set of instructional materials, a written format for sequencing activities or a piece of classroom furniture. Finished products

help teachers translate the ideas of the workshop into actual classroom practice.

11. *Size of the Group.* Some presentations are as effective with 100 participants as they are with 10. However, for workshops that require personal contact, informality, and an interchange of ideas, seven to ten participants seem optimal. Of course, there are exceptions based on the skill of the presenter, the organization of the workshop, and the topic.

12. *The Physical Facility.* The room in which a workshop takes place also plays a role. Accessibility of materials, appearance of the facility, room temperature, lighting, auditory and visual distractions, and so forth may have a subtle but profound effect on the success of a workshop.

## Implications

Should these preliminary findings be confirmed and clarified through further experience, there are a number of important implications to be considered. The criteria can be used to evaluate present inservice programs and to build in the elements of success in the future.

As an example, we can look at the programs sponsored by Project RISE. We have found that workshops we offer on released time in the Center are consistently evaluated more positively than those we offer in the schools. Reference to the criteria will point to some explanations.

1. *Opportunity of Choice.* Our released-time programs in the schools usually consist of a single workshop for the entire staff, whereas our programs at the Center give teachers a variety of alternatives from which to choose.

2. *Content of Workshop.* Our school-based inservice programs most often attempt to meet the needs of an entire staff with a single presentation. But workshops at the Center usually have a narrower focus in terms of grade level or content area.

3. *Opportunity for Active Involvement.* Participant involvement is built in to most Center workshops, but is more difficult to incorporate in large-group inservice programs. However, our more successful school-based programs have been characterized by a high level of teacher involvement.

4. *The Presenter.* There are no consistent differences between presenters used in the schools and in the Center, and this factor, therefore, doesn't seem to account for the marked differences in program evaluations. In fact, one presenter conducted a highly successful workshop at the Center but received only "fair" ratings for an inservice program conducted in a school.

5. *Time Allowed.* In general, our school-based programs are half-day ses-

sions, and our Center programs all-day. For many topics, two-hour inservice sessions seem too short for in-depth experience.

6. *Time of Day.* School-based inservice programs usually occur in the afternoon after teachers have been teaching for four hours. On the other hand, our all-day workshops at the Center draw upon teachers when they are fresh and energetic.

7. *Opportunity for Follow-up.* Opportunities for follow-up have been provided for both school-based and Teacher Center programs; there seems to be no essential difference with respect to this issue.

8. *The Learning Environment.* In this area the Center programs have a distinct advantage. Center staff work hard to maintain the psychological safety, informality, and low-threat potential that create the best conditions for learning. The same conditions are difficult to recreate in a school because of greater numbers of people, the presence of people in a position to evaluate teachers, and a physical environment that is "institutional." The Teacher Center is physically removed from the sources of teacher anxiety that breed defensiveness and resistance to learning.

9. *Teacher Involvement in Planning.* We encourage as much teacher involvement as possible in planning both school-based and Teacher Center programs.

10. *Leaving the Workshop with a Finished Product.* Finished products are more characteristic of Teacher Center workshops, while there is greater use of lectures to present broad topics to large groups in the schools.

11. *Size of the Group.* Generally, our school-based programs include between 18 and 45 participants, while Center workshops consist of 7-14 teachers.

12. *The Physical Facility.* Except that the RISE telephone, director's office, and typist are located in the workshop room, the Center offers a nearly ideal environment for small-group workshops. Materials for most workshops are readily available; the atmosphere is informal and stimulating; and the place is designed to serve as a refuge from institutional rigidity. It is easier to meet the needs of teachers in the Center than in the sterile environment of school cafeterias and gyms where many of our school-based programs take place.

This review is not intended to downgrade the need for continued school-based programs. There are many kinds of programs that are best conducted in a school with the entire school staff. However, the above criteria demonstrate that there are many reasons that teachers evaluate workshops at the Teacher Center more positively than those in the schools. Some of the criteria have to do with the characteristics of the Center itself, but many can be incorporated into school-based programs.

Perhaps more importantly, the criteria point to the fact that many components of a successful workshop can't be provided by a small town or a single school alone. A small town or single school have too few teachers and resources to offer a range of programs that give teachers a choice – one of the most important criteria for success. Further, a single small town or school has too few teachers in any one grade level or content area to make content-specific workshops feasible – another criterion for success. To serve a whole school, group size must be kept high, a factor that can be detrimental. In a nutshell, the findings indicate that our regional approach to inservice education is not only viable, but essential for the breadth and quality of programming that our teachers need.

## Note

[1] For more information about Project RISE, see Peter Martin, "A Teachers' Center for Nine Rural Towns," Teachers' Centers Exchange Occasional Paper No. 2 (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, December 1977). ERIC ED 151 132.

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH KELLOGG

# AN ADVISOR AT WORK

## *Maja Apelman*

For the past seven years, I have been a staff member at the Mountain View Center in Boulder, Colorado, one of the first teachers' centers in the United States. I work with elementary teachers both at the Center and in Boulder and nearby schools. We are a staff of seven people of widely varying backgrounds and personalities who work with teachers, children and materials in our own individual ways. We share, however, a philosophy about teaching and learning which permeates our thinking and our actions and which gives the Center its strength and its integrity.

Having worked for so many years in an organization with a definite philosophy, I find it hard to imagine a teachers' center operating neutrally. Is it possible to balance a strong commitment to a certain view about teaching and learning with the needs of a large and diverse group of teachers? I believe that it is not only possible but very important to strive for such a balance. A teachers' center must not, of course, have a philosophy that is so narrow that large numbers of teachers cannot relate to it. On the other hand, if a center has no point of view at all and tries to be "all things to all people," I fear that it might not generate the energy and excitement that are needed to stimulate teachers to try new ideas and methods in their classrooms.

In the centers receiving Office of Education moneys, teachers will be deciding what kinds of services and support they want. To take full advantage of this opportunity, teachers should know about a variety of options for their own learning, some of which may lie outside their previous experience.

There is a relatively new support role that a teachers' center could sponsor, that has great potential for helping those teachers who want to further their personal and professional growth. The term for this role currently in use is "advisor." There are no existing job descriptions for an advisor and there are probably as many different advisory styles as there are people doing this work. I decided to make up my own definition in order to emphasize that, despite many variations in the role, there are important basic similarities underlying all advisory work.

> Advisors are special kinds of consultants. They provide assistance to teachers only upon request. They come into schools and work with teachers in classrooms. They have no evaluative or supervisory function. They support teachers in all aspects of school life: curriculum development and implementation, classroom organization, reading and math skills, art or science activities, supply of materials, child development questions, relationship with administrators, parents, paraprofessionals, and so on. The success of advisory work depends upon a relationship of mutual trust and respect which develops as teacher and advisor work together and as they learn together through their attempts to solve the problems of daily teaching.

At Mountain View Center there are two different types of advisors: (1) those described in the above definition—sometimes called generalist advisors—who have classroom experience and who draw primarily on that experience in their work with teachers (though they may also have special strengths and interests in a subject matter area); and (2) those whose contributions lie primarily in their special subject matter knowledge. The latter are experts in some field such as science or art or language development; they may or may not have classroom experience but are nonetheless able to share their expertise with teachers. I shall have more to say about these experts later on.

I am a generalist advisor. My way of working has developed over many years and draws on my experience as an early childhood classroom teacher, an instructor of paraprofessionals in Head Start, and an advisor in Boulder classrooms for the past seven years. I also have a strong personal interest in social studies and science and in ways to integrate these two subjects. I want to describe my way of working by relating in some detail how I helped one teacher over a period of about two months.

## Building a Curriculum from "Road Building"[1]

J. teaches second grade in an elementary school in a small town about twelve miles east of Boulder. The previous year I had regularly visited a first-grade teacher in that school, helping her in a variety of ways. Early in the fall of 1976, J. approached me in the corridor. "I want you to help me with social studies," she said, "and to show me how I can use the blocks in my social studies program." (J. teaches in a Follow Through program which supplied all its classrooms with large quantities of unit blocks.) We first planned some explorations within the school building and encouraged the children to reproduce various aspects of the school in the block corner. Soon, however, J. complained that she was at a dead end and that in the block corner where the children had "reproduced" the school, they were "driving the toy trucks down the school corridor." That day, outside the school, I had noticed some machinery on a dirt road along the playground. Since J. had given me a cue about one of the children's interests—cars and trucks—I suggested that the road work outside might be a more suitable topic for study than the school building. J. seemed interested and we planned to use part of her lunch break to go out and talk to some of the workers.

As we walked up to the road crew, sitting on the curb eating their lunch, I thought about the many times I have said to a teacher: "If something interesting is going on in the neighborhood, just go up and ask about it. People are always friendly and helpful." When the men started to give us a bit of a hard time, I was really glad I had offered to go out with J. "Why are you writing things down?" one of them said. "Are you a reporter? I don't talk to reporters." Another one asked: "Are you teachers from this school? Why do you want to know all this stuff about the road?"

Many people feel uncomfortable approaching strangers for information. Teachers can learn to overcome this initial discomfort when they find out how much their program can be enriched by going outside the school for curriculum ideas, but it is obviously helpful and reassuring to have an experienced companion along when you begin. The importance of such support is generally underestimated. Teachers want, need, but generally lack help *in the classroom* when they are trying out new materials, different approaches, or different ways of relating to children. The fact that I was free to work in the room with J. and to judge for myself just where she needed help to implement what she had been wanting to do was basic to the success of our work.

After the initial joking out on the road, one of the workers did tell us that the road was going to be graded and paved with asphalt and that a concrete storm sewer would be constructed at the intersection near the school. We found out who was in charge of the work and asked the names of some of the machines.

Later that afternoon when we took a group of children to the road to watch dump trucks and graders at work, J. was as curious as the children to learn where "the dirt" that was being dumped on the road came from. "Why don't you ask the driver?" I suggested. While I stayed with the children, J. walked up to one of the parked trucks. The driver told her that the dump trucks picked up their loads at a nearby gravel mine. "Wouldn't it be great if the kids could see that place!" I said and offered to stop by at the company office on my way home to find out about the possibility of visiting. There I got more information about the road work and also set up a time after school to visit the gravel mine with J. When we went to the plant we were given a tour, and we found the operation fascinating. We both knew the children had to visit.

J.'s Follow Through model has a strong emphasis on social studies, and she has been encouraged to take field trips and to build her own curriculum around firsthand experiences in the community. But much of the help and advice she has received in the past has been verbal, and like many other teachers she had no experience in constructing her own curriculum. She needed to be taken step-by-step through this process at least once in order to learn how to use local resources and to connect the more traditional subject matter learning with experiences outside the classroom.

I helped J. with the details of the trip: the number of adults to invite along, pre-trip discussion with children, materials to take, such as containers to collect samples of earth and rocks, and sketch pads. When J. asked me about follow-up activities, I encouraged her to observe the children on the trip and to listen carefully to their questions. "We can't really plan for follow-up until we know what will happen at the plant and what will interest the children," I said, but I also stressed the need to have many materials ready in the classroom which would make different kinds of follow-up possible – good books on road building, an enlarged block area, sieves and containers for sifting and sorting aggregate, and so on.

The trip with the children was a great success. We watched huge loaders dig up the ground near where we were standing, thus making a pit out of a grassy field. We saw various layers of soil and rocks, learned what parts of the raw material were used, and how the land was filled in and reclaimed once the rocks had been taken out. We watched "the dirt" being dumped into an enormous crusher which separated out the large rocks to crush them to a specified size. We saw earth with small rocks and with crushed large rocks travel on separate conveyor belts to another machine, which mixed it all up again. From there, yet another conveyor belt took this mix – called "2½ roadbase" – to an edge of an open pit, where it was stockpiled. Luckily for us, a dump truck drove up to be loaded while we were there, and the children recognized it as one of the trucks they had seen near the school. This is just what we had hoped for – to show the children where the raw material came from and how it was processed. Earlier, when we first asked the children where "the dirt" came from, we had been surprised by how little they knew. One youngster even suggested that it was bought at a store!

At the exit of the gravel mine, we asked the school bus driver to drive onto the scale which weighs the loaded trucks. The full bus, including eight adults and 24 children, was weighed, and we were given a ticket with the weight – 15,300 pounds! Encouraged by the friendliness of the man in the scale house, I asked if he would weigh just the children. He agreed, and after the bus drove off the scale, we all got out, and the children walked back to be weighed. The combined weight of the 24 children—1,320 pounds—greatly amused them; what amused them even more was that the combined weight of the eight adults was 1,040 pounds! Back at school I suggested that we borrow the scale from the school nurse and weigh each child. I then gave J. a simple "mini-computer" with which the children could add up their individual weights. They were excited about being able to add such large numbers and pleased when the sum of their individual weights came very close to the truck scale total.

The road construction continued, but because the company was also paving another road in the same community, there were long pauses between the different phases of the work. J. was so involved at this point and so concerned she might miss some aspect of the operation that she asked the teachers whose classrooms faced the road to alert her when something of interest was happening. Whenever a messenger arrived in her room with news of impending action, J. dropped what she was doing and took the children out to the road. The whole school knew about "J. and her road" and although other teachers didn't study what was happening in any detail, a few did take groups of children out to watch when some interesting work was being done.

After the road was graded, a water truck—driven by a woman, much to the children's delight—wetted the loose dirt and a roller packed it down. The workers told the children that this had to be done before the asphalt could be poured. New questions were now being asked. What is asphalt? Where does it come from? How is it made? J. and I made an appointment for another after-school visit, this time to the asphalt plant, and again we arranged for a trip with the children so they could see how and where asphalt was made. Because of changes in the construction schedule, we went to this plant before "our" road was paved. Thus, when the trucks with the hot asphalt finally arrived near the school, the excitement was high. Teachers and children spent almost the whole morning outside watching the work.

J. and I tried to think of a way the children could make a road in the classroom, but we never quite figured out how to simulate the pouring of asphalt. I had one idea—Elmer's glue mixed with black paint—but we didn't have time to try it. Instead we decided to make a large mural which would show the various stages of road work. The children worked hard on this mural. Together with photographs taken on the trips, stories, paintings, and the math work, J. has a permanent record of the study.

Throughout this time, the children were involved and were learning on many different levels through writing, painting, building with blocks, lessons in science and math, and many good discussions about machinery, raw materials, and work processes. They sifted and sorted aggregate brought back from the gravel mine, made a large mural of the various stages of the road work, constructed a simple conveyor belt in the block corner, and so on. Most impressive, perhaps, was J.'s own learning. Much of her previous teaching had been in brief units. At the end of our two months work together, we planned to shift our focus to a nearby construction project and to use it as a new, though related, starting point. As we talked, J. suddenly exclaimed, "We've got the whole year laid out!" Then she added: "The great thing about working this way is that teachers can have fun too."

## Characteristics of the Advisor

What light does this account throw on the working relationship of teacher and advisor? Note that it was J. who initiated the contact and told me what she wanted to work on. My first suggestion—studying the school itself—was not based on any assessment of J.'s pupils or of her own interest. It was a topic that interested me and had worked well for other teachers. J. liked it at first, but it did not arouse in her the kind of enthusiasm which is necessary to sustain the development of a new curriculum topic. I therefore switched to another subject. This kind of flexibility is very important; changes of pace, direction, intensity, and content are often necessary in advisory work.

When I suggested the road work and took J. out to the street, I sensed right away that she was genuinely interested. It was not just a topic to teach to the children, it was a topic that she wanted to learn about. This is another facet of advisory work: if you are going to work on curriculum development, the teacher's and the advisor's personal interest in a subject are most important.

When we went out to the road to talk to the men, I had to remind myself not to assume that what is easy for me (talking to strangers) will also be easy for others. In my work with teachers I have also had to learn that help with the implementation of ideas has to be given repeatedly, and often at a very elementary level—especially when it is an activity that a teacher has never tried before. Consultants tend to assume that teachers know how to implement suggested activities. I cannot emphasize enough how much teachers need and appreciate help in this area. Teachers should be able to ask for this kind of support without feeling that they ought to know how to begin new ventures on their own.

When I talked with J. about our work later, I found out that the initiative I took to set up appointments and make initial cocts with plant administrators was important to her. "I really appreciated that help," she told me, "because time-wise it just seemed impossible for me to get there and set up all these things. I think now that I could do it myself. If it's important and if it's as successful as that project was, you just make the time." J. also mentioned that she liked my accessibility—the fact that I was "as close as the telephone" and she could feel free to call me at any time.

J. also valued my own interest in the road-paving work. "You really got involved and I felt it was sincere," she told me. Another teacher once mentioned something similar: "I feel that we're sharing a lot of the learning together and a lot of the excitement of discovering new things. . . . I feel like you're really interested." I had never thought of my capacity to become "really interested" as anything special until teachers started mentioning it to me, though I had noticed that the teachers with whom I enjoyed working most were the ones who got interested and excited about their own learning.

My work with J., an experienced, competent teacher, revolved around curriculum development: how to use the immediate school environment or events in that environment to enrich the in-school learning of children. Many teachers feel frustrated with the social studies or science texts they get, but they lack the skill or the confidence to develop their own curriculum. I tried to show in this account how we proceeded step-by-step so that the abstract notion of "curriculum development" would take on a concrete reality. The paving of a road next to the school was a convenient happening, but the content of our mutual exploration was less important than the process. I hoped J. would see how a teacher can build curriculum around such happenings and bring almost all areas of subject matter into the study. Judging by J.'s enthusiasm for this way of working, our work was successful.

Working one-to-one with a teacher over an extended period of time tends to be regarded as an uneconomical way of giving help (I worked with J. throughout the year, seeing her weekly). Having worked in this way for seven years with teachers in many different settings, I am convinced that this concentrated, sustained kind of support, although seemingly uneconomical in the short run, gives better results in the long run than many of the more traditional staff-development and inservice techniques in current use. When other teachers in the school become aware of changes in one classroom, they begin to ask for help just as J. did, and in this way a small but important nucleus is created. Teachers can then begin to give each other support and strength.

Advisors and teachers can begin working together almost anywhere. Since teachers initiate the contact, they will have at least a general idea of the direction in which they want to move. J. wanted to strengthen her social studies curriculum, but did not know how to do it. Other teachers may request help in a particular subject area, around problems with a particular child or group of children, around matters of organization and scheduling, or to implement new curriculum ideas which they may have acquired in a workshop. Teachers may not know the exact direction in which they want to move, but they do expect that some change will take place as a result of working with an advisor. This knowledge that teacher and advisor are working towards change, is crucial for the success of the joint work.

The advisor brings to this situation a practical background and theoretical beliefs, as well as a willingness to start working at any point. Advisors need to be patient because change may be slow; they need to be flexible because change may proceed in an unpredictable way. But effective advisors cannot be educationally neutral. Advising is demanding, often exhausting work, and the commitment that is needed to do this job well can grow only out of a firmly held belief about how teachers and children learn.

## Specialist Advisors Enrich Teachers' Learning

Earlier, I mentioned that there were two types of advisors at the Mountain View Center. I have given a brief account of how I have worked as a generalist advisor; now I wish to talk about the specialist advisors.

After J. and I visited the gravel mine, we were intrigued by the different layers of soil and rocks we saw exposed by the diggers. Particularly fascinating was a stratum of very smooth river rocks, several feet below the surface. Everybody who gardens in Boulder is familiar with the reddish clay rocks under the surface of the earth. But where did these smooth, white boulders come from? The previous year, another teacher and I had questions about clay deposits near a brick factory which we had visited with the children. I therefore decided to ask one of the specialist advisors at the Center, whose background is in environmental science, to talk to us and a few other teachers from J.'s school about "what's under the ground and how did it get there."

We learned a great deal that afternoon. Not only did we get answers to our specific questions about clay deposits and gravel mining; we began to understand the topography of our own community, the land formations, mountains, plains, mesas, rivers. It was a fascinating introductory lesson in geology, meaningful to us because we were seeking answers to our own questions and because we were learning something that enriched our understanding about the world in general and about our immediate environment in particular.

I sometimes think that those in charge of teacher education regard prospective and practicing teachers as a somewhat inferior sub-species of the adult population. Teachers tend to be given subject matter that is prepared, packaged, and often diluted for easier consumption. Decisions as to what should be included are rarely made by teachers themselves. J. and I became very frustrated during the course of our study of the road by the lack of adequate and available reference material. The children's books we found did not have enough information; books and pamphlets published for the trade were too technical. We wished for a reference book that combined information on different machines, different types of road surfaces, on the manufacture of cement and concrete and asphalt, on the history and economics of road construction. Realizing how much work had gone into the paving of one single block, we became almost overwhelmed when we thought of the amount of time, money, and material that has gone into building the network of U.S. roads, but we had no easy way to add to our limited knowledge.

Teachers who want to develop their own curriculum need resource books on a large variety of topics rather than curriculum guides in which someone else has selected the material to be taught. I would like to have available curriculum material from which teachers can select material, which they can *adapt* to their own needs rather than material intended to be *adopted* by a whole school district.

Packaging knowledge for universal consumption does not encourage teachers to develop their own potential, their own resourcefulness, their own creativity. At Mountain View Center we believe that teachers should have the opportunity to learn at their own adult level, regardless of whether this learning will be of immediate use in the classroom. Too often teachers are expected to transmit knowledge which they themselves have not sufficiently absorbed. Not only does this sort of teaching lack the core of understanding from which useful teaching connections can be made, but teachers are deprived of the excitement which real learning generates. When teachers themselves enjoy learning, they transmit their enthusiasm about learning to their students. I believe that my own opportunity to learn from the specialist advisors at Mountain View Center has helped me enormously in my work with both teachers and children. Being in touch with my own learning has made me more sensitive, more perceptive, more supportive towards the learning needs of others. It has made me a better teacher.

As to the practical and important question of the relevance of your own new learning to your classroom situation, I would like to say that when you have become a self-propelled learner, the classroom uses for almost any kind of new learning become more and more obvious. At that point, life in school and life outside of school are no longer disconnected, and school for both children and teachers becomes an infinitely richer place.

### Advisors from the "Real World"

Mountain View Center is probably unique in having on its staff experts in various subject areas who can arouse great enthusiasm and excitement about learning in their respective fields. Where can teachers turn to who do not have this resource?

I would like to encourage teachers to go outside the educational community when looking for help with specific subject matter.[2] Every community has its experts, many of whom would be happy to share their expertise and their experience with teachers and with children. But teachers must take the initiative here and must become confident about asking questions and letting the outside resource person know what it is they wish to learn. When your entire professional life is spent in school, your outlook can become too narrow, too limited. I know how positively children react when someone from the "real world" comes into their classroom. Rarely are there discipline problems at such times, because the children are genuinely interested in finding out what this person has to share. Why shouldn't teachers also learn from people in the "real world?"

The attitude of the workmen on the road whom J. and I approached was typical: "Are you teachers from this school? Why do you want to know all that stuff about the road?" "Because it's interesting," I should have replied, "Because the children can learn so much from it, and because we don't know enough about it ourselves. That's why we need your help." This kind of approach would help to break down the isolation of the school from the rest of the community: both teachers and children, and—in this case—road workers benefit from the interaction. People from the community—whether they are physicists or bricklayers, poets or sheepshearers—will *not* tell you how to teach. They *will* tell you what they know, how they learned their trade, how they feel about their work—they can teach you some small part of it.

### Breaking Down the School's Isolation

This brings me to the last point that I wish to make in this essay: the relative isolation under which so many teachers work and the ways in which teachers' centers can help to break down that isolation.

Teachers are isolated in several different ways: a teacher in a self-contained classroom spends at least five hours a day with a group of 20 to 30 children. There are breaks—recess, lunch, specialists who take the class—but on the whole the day is spent in relative isolation from other adults. The only adult meeting place is the teachers' lounge—a place to relax, to chat, to gripe, and to ready oneself for the return to the classroom. Teachers' centers cannot eliminate the teacher's physical isolation, but they can help to make teaching more exciting so that the hours spent with the children will be more rewarding.

Teachers also tend to be isolated from the other teachers in their school. This situation varies greatly from school to school, depending to some degree on the size of the school and on the general tone set by the building principal. Most teachers find at least one or two congenial colleagues among the staff, though it is quite possible to feel alone, especially if your beliefs and your style of teaching are different from those of the majority of teachers. An advisor working out of a teachers' center can help break down this isolation; informal lunchtime or after-school rap sessions can be arranged, as well as workshops on a variety of topics which would interest teachers from various grade levels. An advisor can facilitate sharing among teachers, because the advisor is in a position to know what talents and experience teachers could offer for the benefit of their colleagues. Some schools have a really good esprit de corps with excellent communication among the staff. But many other schools could benefit from the kind of stimulus for better interaction which respected outsiders like advisors might set in motion.

At a deeper level, teachers' isolation is even greater. I am referring to the general lack of contact between teachers of different schools within a district.

Because of the structure and demands of the school day and the tendency to have inservice days for individual schools, teachers cannot sufficiently take advantage of the knowledge and experience of other teachers in the school system. One or two professional days may be used to visit another school, and there are inservice courses which bring teachers from different schools together around a common interest. But these occasions tend to be tightly programmed so that there is little time for teachers to get to know each other or to talk informally about matters of mutual concern. In my work as an advisor in different schools, I frequently arrange discussion groups or meetings around certain topics for the benefit of individual teachers. I want to get these teachers together, because I know that they can learn from each other and that they will find the opportunity to talk or brainstorm with similarly minded colleagues useful and enjoyable. Within a school, a principal or a teacher with leadership qualities could get such communication going; between schools, this is much more difficult and it is here that teachers' centers can play a significant role. I would even like to suggest that "just talking" among teachers could be considered a legitimate activity for an inservice day.

Finally, there is the isolation between the schools and the rest of the community. The organization of teaching tends to isolate children and teachers from life outside of school. To effect changes here would require a fundamental change in the content of the curriculum in the direction which I have described. The separation of school children from what they view as their real world is probably the most difficult but also the most important of all isolations to break down; the kind of education our children receive in school will to a large degree determine how our society survives.

## Notes

[1] This account of building a curriculum from local resources has also been written up in Maja Apelman, "A Permanently Tentative Curriculum," in *Breakaway to Multidimensional Approaches: Integrating Curriculum Development and Inservice Education*, ed. Roy A. Edelfelt and E. Brooks Smith (Washington, D.C.: Association of Teacher Educators, 1978), pp. 29-31.

[2] One teacher whose children were studying how stone houses are built answered an ad in the local paper from a stone mason seeking work. She apologized for not having a job for him but wondered whether he might have some time to talk to her class about his work. The stone mason agreed to come, and teacher and children had a fascinating session with him.

PHOTO BY RONALD AUSTIN

# THE ART AND SCIENCE OF MANAGING A TEACHERS' CENTER*

*Susan Carpenter*

The Teacher Curriculum Work Center in Chicago changed during a period of seven years from an intuitive, organic, informal group of cooperating teachers to a formally managed organization and not-for-profit corporation. We came to value management as both an art and a science—the art and science of creating an environment in which many people could work efficiently and effectively to accomplish the Center's goals.

While I was on the staff of the Center during 1975 through 1977, we developed management practices and systems with the help of Bill Glenn of the Institute for Voluntary Organizations in Downers Grove, Illinois, who consulted with our board and staff.[2] The following pages discuss and illustrate some of the Teacher Curriculum Work Center's management practices and systems, along with ideas from staff members of The Learning Center in St. Louis and The Learning Exchange in Kansas City, both of which are independent teachers' centers. While these principles and examples have been compiled by staff members of independent centers, they are for the most part applicable to centers that have institutional support. We have also incorporated into this article advice from several centers that are established in school districts and universities and that participated in problem-solving sessions on management at the Teachers' Centers Exchange Workparty in St. Louis in June 1977.

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*The material in this article was developed during 1976-1977 as part of a collaborative writing project of Susan Carpenter and Becca Ruben of the Teacher Curriculum Work Center (TCWC) in Chicago; Gail Johnston and Chris Walker of The Learning Exchange in Kansas City; and Emily Richard, Jane Porter, and Mary Seager of The Learning Center in St. Louis. More ideas and advice have been added from the Proceedings of the June 1977 St. Louis Workparty sponsored by the Teachers' Centers Exchange.[1]

We learned that several elements of a formally managed organization are indispensable to a teachers' center: a *goals statement*; generally understood procedures and formally stated *policies* of operation that may include bylaws; *record keeping* procedures; *job descriptions* and hiring procedures; and *meeting structure*. (Each of these elements is discussed below.)[3] These are the processes that answered the needs of TCWC. They cannot be transferred directly to other situations, because the solutions of any center's management needs rise out of a mindful interaction among the center's constituency, ideas suggested by others (including those in this article), and the constraints of the local situation.

## Goals and Purposes Inspire Programs

Clearly stated goals and purposes are fundamental to the management of an organization. Without such a statement it is impossible to direct an organization over time or to evaluate its programs. The formulation of goals by the board and staff promotes a common focus, ensures consistency between short-term projects and long-range goals, and allows the staff and board to set priorities for the multitude of program requests that a center receives from teachers, schools, professors, administrators, parents, and the community.

In 1977 the board and staff of our Center worked out a goals statement and rationale. We believe the process of working together over several months—discussing, arguing, and clarifying ideas and values and then finally coming to consensus—is an invaluable one for every center. We no longer "hand out" our statement to others, because even if they agree completely with the statement, using ours as a starting point renders their reflecting together a far less meaningful experience.

It might be helpful to readers, however, to know how our statement is organized and the kinds of concerns we address We divide it into one general *purpose statement* "To help teachers improve the quality of education for children," and eight *action goals*, for example, "Encouraging teachers to clarify and examine their educational goals and to evaluate their practices," and "Providing an educational resource for the local community." These are followed by six *rationale* paragraphs that describe beliefs fundamental to the way the Center operates and beliefs about the nature of individuals and the process of change. For example,

> We believe that self-esteem is vital to growth and interacts with it in producing change. Any change in attitudes or behavior involves the risk of failure, and individuals must see themselves as capable before they can risk changing. The

> Center seeks to build and support teachers' self-esteem by creating an accepting environment where it is safe to try out new ways; by listening and responding to their immediate concerns; and by providing opportunities for them to share their capabilities with others.

The Institute for Voluntary Organizations provided us with a "Hierarchy of Planning" scheme that is helpful for shaking down idealistic purposes into practical programs – without losing the ideals. This hierarchy is shown in Figure 1.

You can do the planning process the other way around: start with a well-focused purpose and an urgent, immediate problem or awareness of need. A process of checking suggestions for projects against your overall goals contains seven steps:

1. Consider whether you can accept responsibility for dealing with the described need.
2. If you can accept responsibility for dealing with it, analyze the need – what brings it about and what are its components?
3. Define the need so that you and others clearly understand it.
4. Conceptualize and visualize programs or projects to meet the need.
5. *Select a course of action*.
6. *Carry out* your course of action.
7. *Document* what you do and *evaluate* accomplishment against your immediate and long-term purposes.

### Shared Procedures Spread Responsibility

Delegation of responsibility is a criterion of good management, but responsibilities in a teachers' center cannot be shared unless there are orderly, open procedures well understood by all who work there. Several people, not just the director, need to know details of how the center operates. It is important that the board spell out general policies for handling problems and new events or circumstances. Such policies help a staff design implementation procedures in a consistent way, eliminating the need to constantly generate fresh decisions on basically similar matters.

Think together about simple procedures (set by the staff) and more knotty policies (these are the board's responsibility): What hours will the center be open? (A teachers' center does not have to stay open for long hours each day, because teachers may have time to come in only after school, in evenings, or on Saturdays.) Should you set aside and schedule a regular amount of time for staff preparation, during which you close the center and do not answer the

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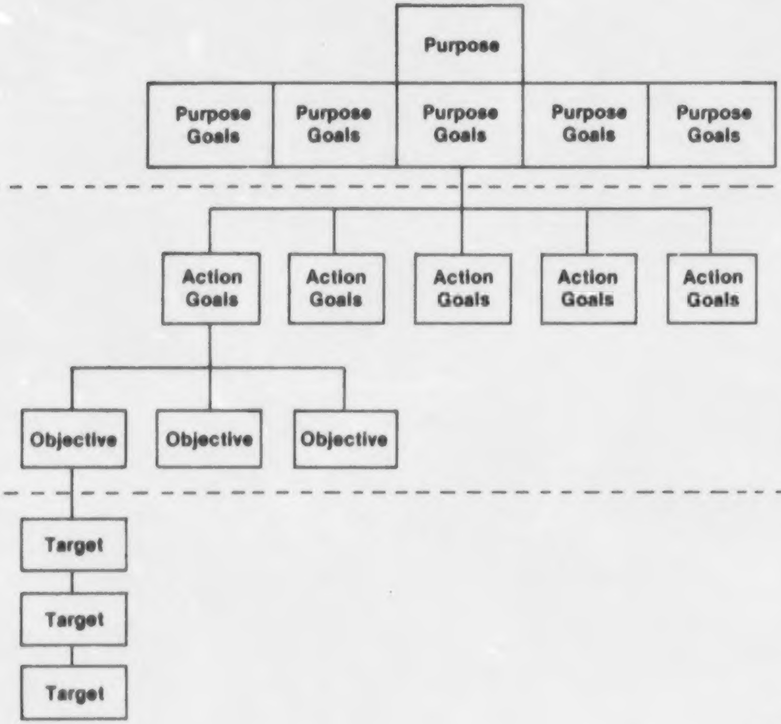
**Figure 1**

*Hierarchy of Planning*


Purpose
Purpose Goals
Purpose Goals
Purpose Goals
Purpose Goals
Purpose Goals
Action Goals
Action Goals
Action Goals
Action Goals
Action Goals
Objective
Objective
Objective
Target
Target
Target

- Purpose and purpose goals, philosophical base from which an organization operates.

- Action goals, long-term, 3-5 years.
- Objectives, short-term, 1-12 months.
- Objectives are generated from goals and current issues.

- Targets are short term, up to one month, set against deadlines. This is also called "program planning."

  Targets should be conceived and articulated in a way that permits evaluation.

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phone? Will you loan or rent your space to other groups during times when the center is closed? Will you charge fees for workshops? Just for materials used? (Centers that begin with ample funding and provide free services have difficulty charging fees after the funding expires. For this reason you may decide to charge a minimal fee for materials and workshops right from the beginning.) What will you pay workshop leaders? Will you pay the same amount to all? (Some centers establish a set fee and give the workshop leader the option of cancelling the workshop or lowering the fee if there is insufficient registration to break even. Or they agree to pay workshop leaders half the total registration fees up to a set amount.) Who is responsible for planning, publicity, organizing, preparing the space and supplies, and cleaning up after the workshop? Will you charge membership fees? What privileges go with membership? If there is one secretary for several staff members, who decides which work has priority?

Some of the above questions imply policy decisions, while others are procedures that can be set by center staff. What is an important policy question in one center may be a simple procedural concern in another. There is no need for the board to waste its time and talents on simple procedures—the staff need the wide perspectives and experience of the board as they struggle together to frame policies. Whenever the staff is feeling too constrained or too free, there is probably a need for direction, for a policy that can serve as a guideline for subsequent decisions.

You cannot anticipate everything that will happen and you don't want to box yourself in, but you must value consistent policy as a way of conserving energy and good will. A "Policy Book" that describes board policies and a separate listing of "Staff Procedures" may be helpful, especially if there are part-time volunteers helping staff the center.

## Records Write Your History

Documenting your projects and programs as you go is your chance to make history, understand your present from the perspective of your past, and foresee your future. What you do today is intimately related to what you will be doing in a year. Don't rely on your memory, however. Find a way to preserve today for tomorrow's planning.

Records help you evaluate how your actions further your goals. They are invaluable for the report writing that is inevitable in all externally funded projects, and they may be a seedbed of ideas for future programs. You can design and adapt any record-keeping forms and procedures that you think are valuable and worth the time they require to maintain. Remember that every record is the product of a system of procedures that several people probably will have to implement with minimum training.

Decide what records to keep by first reviewing your goals and then deciding what kinds of information would let you know whether you're achieving your goals. What records do your bylaws and funders require? What records will help you refer requesters to the human, material, and information resources you're collecting?

Following are kinds of records that a center can keep. (No one center would choose to maintain all of these.)

*Organizational:*

- Board and staff meeting minutes bound by year.
- Policies and procedures book.
- Correspondence files and meeting/phone call notes. (If you have several staff members sharing responsibilities, design a simple form on which everyone can jot down a record of substantive telephone and face-to-face conversations. Keep these records with letters written and received in a day-by-day "Active Reading File" long enough (several days) for all staff to read. This procedure helps keep everyone aware of happenings without frequent staff meetings—if people train themselves to read the file regularly, if they are selective about what goes into it, and if they can read each other's handwriting.

*Programming:*

- Plans, brochures, descriptions, flyers, calendars, feedback questionnaires, and evaluations of workshops and projects.
- Master management calendar for the year. An example is shown in Figure 2. This ongoing record structures the staff's start-of-year planning; avoids double-scheduling; alerts staff members to duties; provides for changes, updating, and check-off; and serves as a record of completed tasks. Use a giant-size wall calendar that displays the whole year on one sheet—it is most efficient for everyone to write on one sheet.
- Master workshop and program calendar (same functions as above).

*Financial:*

- Income/expense sheets, showing the budget, planned monthly expenditures, actual monthly expenditures, year-to-date planned, year-to-date actual, and variance.

**Figure 2**

*Example of Center Master Management Calendar, 1977-1978*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ***SEPTEMBER***<br>Board Meeting 9/19<br>Newsletter<br>Membership Drive<br>Finalize Budget for Current Year<br>Contractual Workshop Mailing (optional)<br>Quarterly Tax Returns | ***OCTOBER***<br>Board Meeting 10/18<br>Financial Campaign Kick-off | ***NOVEMBER***<br>Board Meeting 11/21<br>Newsletter<br>Program Planning for January to April |
| ***DECEMBER***<br>Board Meeting 12/9<br>Quarterly Tax Return | ***JANUARY***<br>Board Meeting 1/17<br>Newsletter<br>W-2 Reports | ***FEBRUARY***<br>Board Meeting 2/20<br>Membership Drive |
| ***MARCH***<br>Board Meeting 3/21<br>Newsletter<br>Budget Review<br>Quarterly Tax Report | ***APRIL***<br>Board Meeting 4/18<br>Financial Campaign | ***MAY***<br>Board Meeting 5/16<br>Newsletter<br>Program Planning for June to August<br>Annual Meeting |
| ***JUNE***<br>Board Meeting 6/20<br>Board Training<br>Election of Officers<br>Quarterly Tax Report | ***JULY***<br>Board Meeting 7/18<br>Summer Newsletter<br>Program Planning for September to December | ***AUGUST***<br>Board Meeting 8/15<br>Recruitment and Training of Volunteers<br>Annual Report<br>Arrange for Audit<br>COT Matching Grant due |

- Income and expenses in percentages or a graph.
- Lists of funding strategies tried or conceived, with comments.
- Equipment inventory.
- Service agreements and contracts.

*Public Relations:*

- Flyers, mailers, newsletters, newspaper articles about the center, procedures and time lines for public relations campaigns.

*Human Resources:*

- Record cards for individual members or participants. List each participant's school, residence, talent to share, special interests, visits to the center, and workshops taken and led. Keep these cards in a place where participants can record each time they come to the center.
- Cards for institutional members and firms contributing recycle materials.
- Daily attendance records.
- Facts and statistics (including maps and phone numbers) on schools in the service area.
- Volunteer list (names, abilities, interests and availability).
- Consultant list (same as above).
- Account of how staff members spend their time.

A note about filing these records: All the materials outlined above will be unmanageable clutter unless you devise ways to store them in a central place ready for easy retrieval. Organize your files in harmony with your organizational structure or some other system that comes naturally to all the people using the records. One person in the center should have responsibility for filing the records.

## Job Descriptions Clarify Your Work

Before you can designate or recruit people to carry out specific tasks directed toward the center's goals, you must be clear which tasks are the responsibility of each staff position and which tasks will be carried out by board members or by regular and occasional volunteers.

How do you decide how many and what jobs to create? Look at all the possible functions for staff members within your center. Figure 3 provides an example of a chart that can be used in considering possible staff functions. Do you need to combine these functions with special talents and experiences in such areas as language arts, math, science, the arts; preschool, primary, sec-

### Figure 3

*Possible Functions of Center Staff Members*

STAFF POSITIONS

Staff Functions

| | Board Member | Staff Member #1 | Staff Member #2, #3, #4 (etc.)* | Consultant/ Volunteer |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Director | | | | |
| Secretary | | | | |
| Workshop Coordinator | | | | |
| Workshop Leader | | | | |
| Publicist | | | | |
| Fund Raiser | | | | |
| Librarian | | | | |
| Scrounge Collector | | | | |
| Evaluator/ Documentor | | | | |
| Special Project Developer | | | | |
| Liaison with School/District | | | | |
| Shop Instructor | | | | |
| Administrative Assistant | | | | |
| Bookkeeper/ Budget Planner | | | | |
| Janitor | | | | |
| Drop-in Host | | | | |
| In-classroom Advisor | | | | |

*Add a separate column for each staff position you can consider.

ondary, or private schools; community organizations; counseling; space design and construction?

A board composition analysis sheet can give you an overall view of your board members' talents and their willingness to work in or for the center, and suggest what you need to hire staff for or what kinds of new board members to recruit. You can carry out this analysis by making a matrix with board members' names listed down a left-hand column and the following traits (and others important to you) listed across the top: sex; race; ethnic background; school affiliation; work experience; neighborhood; institutional attachments; talents for program (break these down by subject); financial clout or skill; volunteer tasks undertaken (or willingness to volunteer); and committee assignments.

Descriptions of the responsibilities of board committees have an influence on staff job descriptions. A "committee commission" is like a job description for a board member. As an example, the Business Committee Commission of the Teacher Curriculum Work Center in 1977-1978 is shown in Figure 4.

It is essential for staff members to understand not only what tasks they have but also how their job fits into the whole organization, to whom they report, to whom they relate (such as members or school district administrators), and what authority they have. As you define the jobs in your center, you might think of the staff and board as a wheel. The center's purpose is the hub or axle. Firmly attached to this hub are the tasks that give the center its meaning and shape. The inner rim of the wheel is an administrative assistant, keeping the spokes in balance and providing support and strength for the tasks. The outer rim of the wheel is the director and the board, giving the entity its final shape, setting the limits, and touching the outside world but sending strength inward.

As you prepare to hire for a particular position, you should write a job description that reflects not only the functions but the relationships that characterize the position. The job description should be written in down-to-earth terms: activity/function within the center; line of authority/reportability (both ways); authority (things to be done without asking supervisor); responsibilities; standards of performance; experience required and desired. Do not create an impossible job. Be realistic about what can be accomplished in the first (second, third, etc.) year.

When you've written the objective job description, think about (and list) personal qualities you will look for in staff members, such as flexibility, resourcefulness, openness to growth, sense of humor, and ability to work independently. Words that teachers' center leaders have used to describe good staff people include the following: confident, experienced, non-threatening,

## Figure 4

*Teacher Curriculum Work Center*
*Business Committee Commission*

TO: The Business Committee
FROM: The Board of Directors

### *GENERAL COMMISSION*

The Business Committee is commissioned by and responsible to the Board of Directors to assume the primary relationship in matters pertaining to the organizational finances. It shall operate in ways intended to achieve the corporate purposes, maintain quality programs and services and perform the following functions subject to and in conformity with established policies of the Board of Directors, and agreed upon guidelines of the funding sources.

### *APPOINTMENTS AND COMPOSITION*

1. The Chairman shall be elected the Treasurer of the Board of Directors.
2. The Committee shall include the Chairman and a minimum of two other Board members. Additional non-board members may be appointed as needed for their particular ability.
3. Board-member appointments to the Business Committee will be made by the Board President on an annual basis with the advice and consent of the Committee Chairman. Non-board members are appointed by the Committee Chairman in consultation with the Board President.
4. Subcommittees and task forces may be formed as needed, and non-board members may be appointed to serve.

### *RESPONSIBILITIES*

1. *Appoint* and supervise the Property Committee, which has responsibility for the physical facilities.
2. *Participate* in the preparation of the organization's budget as outlined in the Corporate Budgeting Process.
3. *Review* monthly finance reports received from Accounting and report to the Board of Directors on the financial operation.
4. *Control* current financial operations within the limit of the total approved budget.
5. *Prepare* for the Board of Directors meeting, at the beginning of each calendar quarter, a financial projection for the current year and make appropriate recommendations concerning necessary actions to achieve a balanced budget.
6. *Organize* and establish such subcommittees as may be required to further its work and fulfill its function.

honest, flexible, objective, assertive, strong, hard-working, able to share responsibility, gutsy, able to risk and deal with failure, and thoughtful listener.

One of the stiffest tests of the creativity of a leader of a teachers' center is the hiring of staff. Hiring is also a test of efficiency, because good hiring decisions tend to make supervision a simple matter. Use your imagination about places to recruit applicants. The most obvious place to look is among strong center participants. Tell all your contacts who understand your visions for the center that you're hiring. Consider people retired from schools or industry and people experienced in community, museum, arts, or social agency work, as well as educators. To find additional volunteer staff members, check out volunteer bureaus and social organizations that require members to do volunteer work, as well as federal job programs such as CETA, WIN, and VISTA.

In your interviews with applicants, communicate not only the facts about the job but your feelings about it. Observe the applicant in the center. Do you see enthusiasm, outgoing nature, self-direction, the ability to help participants initiate their own learning? Ask for and study the applicant's resume and check references with a personal phone call ahead of time, so that you have specific questions to ask about experience and aptitude. It may be wise to invite anyone you are considering hiring to do some volunteer work in the center, even if only for a few days.

Trust your intuition as you hire. Look for affirmation in the applicant of your basic principles and values, but appreciate different styles that will complement yours and make up for your lacks.

Know how to say "no." But know that nobody's perfect—at least not at first. Good orientation to the center, thoughtful training, attentive, assertive but positive communication of expectations and procedures, and a collaborative, supportive, and creative atmosphere in a center will help people bloom. (Elsewhere in this book, the article "Staffing a Teachers' Center" by Christine San Jose, discusses leadership roles and supervisory relationships within a center.)

## Meetings Connect and Extend Tasks

The center's staff and board meetings can formulate and facilitate effective action toward goals, or they can be a frustrating energy drain. The quality of the process is usually reflected in the quality of the decisions made in the meeting. Except in unusual circumstances and with unusual people, someone needs to plan well and someone needs to lead. The agenda and the leader should make clear what is to be attended to and what is expected of the group for each agenda item. If the item is a report, is it a formal report or just a time for updating and sharing? Is a decision required? Who has prepared a decision to propose? Will follow-up be needed? Who will do it, and how and when? The minutes of the meeting should highlight these points. An "issue flow and assignment sheet," of which an example is given in Figure 5, provides a way of handling a number of topics in one meeting and keeping a record that becomes the basis for planning future agendas.

Meetings of the center's staff should be held not only for business and planning, but also for strengthening relationships and fostering the staff's professional stimulation and learning. Here are some tips for staff meetings:

- Try to meet on a regular basis and at a regular time. If it's not possible to have all staff members on hand at the same time, meet when you can, but meet! (Except for those infrequent times when it might be better not to have a meeting—to wait for feelings to calm or for a situation to develop further before issues are faced.)
- Try to bar interruptions during meetings. Close the center, turn off the phones or (better) have a non-staff person take all calls, and consider the advantages of holding meetings away from the center.
- Develop procedures for resolving (not just voicing) gripes, and for brainstorming ideas and evaluating projects.
- Take time for interpersonal concerns as well as work. Deal directly with irritations that arise out of different working styles.
- Devote meetings to topics of common responsibility that require mutual work, rather than to items that can be taken care of by written messages or one-to-one conversations and decisions.
- Separate short-range and long-range planning issues, but recognize their inevitable interrelationship.
- Blend practical planning of tasks with intellectual stimulation and new learning together: a book to discuss, a new piece of curriculum to explore.
- Occasionally invite an outsider to help you understand the process of your meetings and how to improve them.
- Spend some time on reflective thinking together. Keep journals. Interview each other about your work.
- Deal openly with any perceived "failures," knowing they provide excellent learning opportunities and new starting points. Equally important: celebrate successes.

Your efficiency and orderliness are not ends in themselves. They are designed to enable you to be relaxed, informal, and welcoming to teachers who are seeking you out and valuing you because you do not look and feel like

**Figure 5**

*Issue Flow and Assignment Sheet*

Organizational Component ______________________

Date ______________________

| ***Issue*** | ***Source*** | ***Assignment*** | ***Reporting Person*** | ***Due Date*** | ***Action Required*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Y-athon benefit | Eleanor N. (community liaison) | Finance Comm. | Shirley R. (chairman) | Feb. 4 Board Meeting | Initial report |
| Bylaw change | Marty G. (lawyer) | Bylaw Comm. | Austin H. (chairman) | March 6 Board Meeting | Recommendations for change |
| Fees for services | Judy M. (director) | Business Comm.<br>Program Comm. | Sandy S. (committee member) | Feb. 4 | Policy decision |
| | | | | | |

a conventionally managed office or bureaucracy. All management practices, in fact, should be aimed at making it possible for people, even if they are beginners, to use your center's services and facilities spontaneously and effortlessly. A teachers' center's purpose is, after all, to lure people into new areas of discovery and learning, and it is the nature of new areas of discovery and learning that we must enter as beginners. All students are in the situation of being beginners; for teachers to be in touch with themselves as beginners keeps them in touch with the joys, fears, and hopes that accompany learning. The teachers' center should reaffirm adults' faith in the process and the joy of learning, gaining competence, taking risks, and enriching oneself. It should help teachers support their students and celebrate with them. The effect of the center's management on its participants should be to convey this message: We let you be a beginner if you let yourself. Many center staff and board members will be beginners in the area of management skills. They, too, will need to approach center management as a learning process and trust their own creative solutions, especially the ones that rise intuitively out of their own experience.

## Notes

[1] "Proceedings of Workparty #2, St. Louis, June 1977" (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1977).

[2] Much of the advice that Bill Glenn gave us is available in his book, *The Effective Voluntary Board of Directors: What It Is and How It Works*, by William R. Conrad and William R. Glenn. (Chicago: Swallow Press, 811 West Junior Terrace, Chicago, Illinois 60613, 1976).

[3] Budget structure and the function of a board of directors in an independent teachers' center, are discussed in "The Budget and the Board" by Richard Steets, which immediately follows this article. Public relations and development of a center's constituency are not discussed in this book, but they are addressed in "Proceedings of Workparty #2, St. Louis, June 1977," (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1977).

PHOTO BY RUTH KREITZMAN

# THE BUDGET AND THE BOARD

### *Richard Steets*

## Part 1: Budgeting for Teachers' Centers*

Much has been written about the genesis and philosophy of teachers' centers and their funding methods and problems, but the anatomy of their costs and self-generated revenues has borne less scrutiny. Although existing centers represent a perplexing variety of cost, revenue, and management patterns, they have generated enough experience to help others plan for the diverse shapes of the future.

This article presents illustrations of budgeting that have been drawn from the experience of existing teachers' centers. The illustrations are intended to address budget issues in concrete terms by identifying and quantifying major cost and revenue elements, showing how these elements interact, demonstrating their most critical characteristics, showing their effect on planning decisions, and forecasting their cost consequences. It is hoped that this information will assist people who are planning new centers or seeking to improve budget-related procedures in existing centers.

For the purpose of this discussion, three budget models have been constructed. The first two represent different management patterns in teachers' centers operating outside of an established institution. The third illustrates the economic profile of a center that has institutional sponsorship. In all three models costs have been broken out into separate categories. Some of the categories customarily used in accounting, such as "administrative" and "direct," have been replaced by others that seem more valuable in highlighting priority-setting and decision-making issues for a center. In Models I and II all costs have been designated as either "fixed" or "flexible," with the variation between the two models reflecting different staffing patterns. In Model III the implications of institutional involvement have been emphasized through a distinction between "absorbed" and "incremental" costs. Models I and II are discussed together below, followed by a discussion of Model III.

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*During 1976-77, Richard Steets, a retired controller of a division of General Foods Corporation, took on a part-time assignment as consultant to the Ford Foundation on costs and budgets of independent teachers' centers. He worked with four centers, two of which were Foundation grantees, visited two other centers, and talked with staff members in still another center. He observed center activities on site, examined the books, interviewed staff members, and in some cases assisted staff members in setting up new accounting procedures. The Foundation asked him to draw upon this experience to sketch out some models of different approaches to budgeting, contrasting types so as to illuminate issues

The second part of this article contains a discussion about the selection and effective use of an advisory board for a teachers' center. The experience of most existing centers has indicated that a capable and versatile advisory board can act as a valuable resource to the staff of a teachers' center in budget planning as well as other management tasks. The suggestions are intended primarily for centers that do not already have an advisory or policy board as part of their structure.

## Models I and II

Table 1 below shows the budgets for two hypothetical independent teachers' centers, designated as Model I and Model II. Both centers have a budget of $93,000 per year and are designed to have the same programmatic capacity, including provision of informal discussions, advice, and access to materials on a "drop-in" basis; operation of a workshop program and publication of a newsletter.

The difference between the two models lies in the ratio of fixed cost to total annual costs. Model I has a higher proportion of fixed costs, or spending commitments that remain constant (or vary only slightly) throughout the year regardless of changes in the volume of the center's activity. Model II allows a greater proportion of "flexible" costs, or expenditures that can rise according to the level of activity, because long-term spending commitments have been limited to the bare essentials – occupancy and related costs and minimal staffing. The most important factor in this difference is the staffing patterns of the two centers. As the table indicates, Model I has a full-time staff of five persons, consisting of a director, three professional staff members, and one clerical staff member, and uses fee-paid consultants to a relatively small extent. Model II provides for a director, one professional staff member, one clerical staff member, and a much more extensive use of consultants in its workshop program.

The difference between the two models is more than a matter of economics.

## Table 1

*Annual Expense and Revenue Budgets for Two Independent Teachers' Centers*

| | MODEL I | | | MODEL II | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Fixed | Flexible | Total | Fixed | Flexible | Total |
| **EXPENSES:** | | | | | | |
| **Staff:** | | | | | | |
| Director | $14,000 | | $14,000 | $14,000 | | $14,000 |
| Professional Staff | 33,000 | | 33,000 | 11,000 | | 11,000 |
| Clerical; | | | | | | |
| Full Time | 7,500 | $ 2,000 | 9,500 | 7,500 | $ 2,000 | 9,500 |
| Part Time | | | | | 3,000 | 3,000 |
| Consultants | | 1,500 | 1,500 | | 17,500 | 17,500 |
| Payroll Tax, Benefits | 7,600 | 300 | 7,900 | 4,600 | 600 | 5,200 |
| Total Staff | $62,100 | $ 3,800 | $65,900 | $37,100 | $23,100 | $60,200 |
| **Other Costs:** | | | | | | |
| Rent | $ 3,600 | | $ 3,600 | $ 3,600 | | $ 3,600 |
| Utilities | 3,000 | | 3,000 | 3,000 | | 3,000 |
| Telephone | 1,200 | | 1,200 | 1,200 | | 1,200 |
| Stationery, Printing | 2,500 | $ 2,500 | 5,000 | 2,500 | $ 2,500 | 5,000 |
| Maintenance | 1,200 | | 1,200 | 1,200 | | 1,200 |
| Postage | 2,000 | 1,000 | 3,000 | 2,000 | 1,000 | 3,000 |
| Insurance | 1,000 | | 1,000 | 900 | | 900 |
| Accounting, Legal | 1,500 | | 1,500 | 1,500 | | 1,500 |
| Books, Periodicals | 1,000 | | 1,000 | 1,000 | | 1,000 |
| Staff Expenses | 1,000 | | 1,000 | 500 | | 500 |
| Furniture, Equipment | 1,200 | | 1,200 | 1,200 | | 1,200 |
| Supplies, Materials | 900 | 2,700 | 3,600 | 900 | 2,700 | 3,600 |
| Miscellaneous | 800 | | 800 | 800 | | 800 |
| Reserves | | | | | 6,300 | 6,300 |
| Total Other Costs | $20,900 | $ 6,200 | $27,100 | $20,300 | $12,500 | $32,800 |
| **Total Expenses** | **$83,000** | **$10,000** | **$93,000** | **$57,400** | **$35,600** | **$93,000** |
| **INCOME** | | | | | | |
| **By Source:** | | | | | | |
| On Hand at Beginning | $ 2,460 | | $ 2,460 | $ 2,460 | | $ 2,460 |
| Grants, Gifts | 50,000 | | 50,000 | 50,000 | | 50,000 |
| Workshop Income | | $32,640 | 32,640 | | $32,640 | 32,640 |
| Sales of Materials, and Supplies | | 4,000 | 4,000 | | 4,000 | 4,000 |
| Memberships | | 3,000 | 3,000 | | 3,000 | 3,000 |
| Newsletter | | 900 | 900 | | 900 | 900 |
| **Total Income** | **$52,460** | **$40,540** | **$93,000** | **$52,460** | **$40,540** | **$93,000** |

Its implications reach into issues of philosophy of management, the amount of staff continuity desired for a center, the quality and diversity of a center's programs, and its ability to expend and contract in rhythm with demand for its services and changing levels of financial support. Model I offers the advantage of continuity in the staff it offers to assist teachers; at the same time, it makes management of the staff (including allocation of staff time for evening and Saturday workshops) a major concern of the director. In Model I, the workshop or in-school program must be carried out almost entirely by the staff since little money is available for outside consultants. Model II offers greater flexibility in the timing and content of the workshop program. Model II may be more likely to attract volunteers for the conducting of workshops and other tasks and to create the "ripple effect" whereby users of the center volunteer their services and expertise and the circle of working enthusiasts widens.

It should be noted, of course, that for purposes of illustration the two models occupy extreme ends of the fiscal policy spectrum. Real-life teachers' centers would probably be likely to take (or evolve to) a more central position.

While reviewing the figures in the table, the reader should keep in mind that they are the forecasted costs and revenues of a one-year operating plan. Budgeting can be an exercise in futility unless it represents a reasonable financial translation of well-thought-out plans that have a good chance of being carried out. The more controllable features of the plans, such as rent and staff costs, can be precisely established. The effects of external influences, over which there is limited control, can only be estimated. However, the plan is based on what the external conditons are expected to be, not on what they are hoped to be.

The following comments, after a brief general foreword, are keyed to the line items in the budgets shown in the table.

### *General Comment*

Both budgets assume that $93,000 will be available for the year's operation. This fund is made up of pledged support, contracts in hand and in negotiation stages, revenue from sales of supplies and books, dues and subscriptions, small donations, and income from workshops.

As was indicated above, the costs are classified as "fixed" or "flexible" for budgeting purposes. Expenditures that will vary only slightly or not at all in proportion to changes in the volume of the activities are "fixed." Those labeled "flexible" represent the direct out-of-pocket costs that rise and fall with the level of activity. Expenses such as telephone costs, although partly affected by activity volume, are budgeted as "fixed" because of the difficulty in identifying which portion of a bill corresponds to a particular program. Categories that cannot be earmarked separately in the accounting system should not be stated separately in the budget.

### *Staff*

*Director.* Only the salary of the director is shown on this line.

*Professional Staff.* The Model I budget contains the annual salaries of three professional staff members who will assist the director. The single additional professional staff member designated in Model II has been included to provide needed counsel and assistance to the director and to act as a stand-in in the director's absence.

*Clerical.* Both operations are provided with a full-time clerk typist, and in both cases this person's salary includes $2,000 for overtime. In Model I no funds are available for part-time help to pick up overloads. The professional staff is scheduled to help out in this area, particularly in connection with work generated by their own program activities. The director of Model II has set aside $3,000 for part-time help and also plans to use volunteers.

Both overtime and part-time costs have been classified as flexible, since they will increase or decrease with the amount of workshop activity.

*Consultants.* The disparity in consultant fees for the two models demonstrates the differing approaches to professional staffing upon which the budgets are based.

In Model I the director has asked professional staff members to devote 60% of their work weeks for forty weeks (roughly the academic year) to the workshop program. They will spend their remaining time in such activities as advising teachers during drop-in hours; assisting with the administrative work of the programs; writing, gathering, and editing contributions to the newsletter; helping to prepare proposals; conducting general educational research; attending staff meetings and so forth. The 60% workshop time or 24 hours per week, is to be spent preparing for and leading an average of four three-hour sessions each week, with an hour of preparation for each classroom hour.

Under this plan each staff member can conduct 160 workshops of three hours each per year. The actual schedule might vary so long as the annual target is met. Intensified activity might be scheduled in a few of the summer weeks, for example, allowing reduced output during the academic year. Outside consultants will conduct 30 workshops per year in subjects that lie outside the fields of expertise of the professional staff.

In Model II the assistant to the director will carry the same schedule (including the running of 160 workshops) as the professional staff members in Model I. All the remaining workshops will be conducted by consultants.

Although the two workshop programs may differ in content and do differ in staffing, they are identical in quantity.

| | *Model I* | *Model II* |
|---|---|---|
| Workshops scheduled to be conducted by staff | 480 | 160 |
| Workshops to be conducted by outside consultants | 30 | 350 |
| | 510 | 510 |

Both centers have established a rate of $50 for consultant fees. The $1,500 shown for Model I and the $17,500 for Model II have been set up in the "flexible" category, since any sessions not held will not be paid for. Obviously Model II can absorb considerably more slippage in its workshop program than can Model I.

*Payroll Taxes and Benefits.* This line item includes the employer's share of Social Security taxes, unemployment taxes, and hospitalization costs. A rate of 14% has been applied to the salaries of all regular employees of both centers and 10% to the part-time help of Model II. These costs are usually not incurred for consultants, who are considered independent contractors. Tax and benefit costs follow the salaries against which they are levied into the "fixed" and "flexible" columns.

### *Other Costs*

Line item comments are restricted to items that highlight differences in resource allocation or address the fixed/flexible nature of the spending.

*Stationery and Printing.* Since the newsletter absorbs a substantial amount of this provision, a portion of the expense is identified as "flexible" in both models to reflect variation in the size, frequency, and subscription volume of the publication.

*Postage.* The portion that has been termed "flexible" represents the cost of mailing the newsletter.

*Insurance.* This expenditure is mostly liability and workmen's compensation insurance; fire and casualty coverage are inexpensive because of the low values involved. A small amount is included for Fidelity Bond coverage. The difference in amounts in the two budgets is caused by the different number of employees.

*Staff Expenses.* Local travel and meeting expenses are estimated at a lower level for Model II because of the smaller professional staff.

*Supplies and Materials.* Seventy-five percent of this expense is provided to support the workshop program. It will fluctuate in direct proportion to changes in the level of that activity.

*Reserves.* Since the two organizations anticipate identical funding, and since the fiscal policies of Model II result in greater flexibility and reduced costs for the same level of service, Model II has been able to leave a substantial amount in its Reserve Account. This reserve can be spent opportunely, invested to earn interest, used to help absorb any slippages in revenue, or carried over into the succeeding year.

*Total Expenses.* In Model I some 89% of the total budget falls into the "fixed" or committed category versus 62% in Model II. This is not to say that all of these funds are totally or irrevocably committed at the outset. But Model I has established employment obligations and a standard of living at a much higher and, therefore, more tenuous level that is highly sensitive to cost overruns and revenue short falls. Model II, on the other hand, has a 38% cushion available to absorb the shocks of financial disappointment.

### *Income by Source*

*General Comment.* For simplicity's sake and to show income generally in the same category as the cost which produced it, the terms "fixed" and "flexible" have been carried over into the revenue side of the budgets. These terms are unconventional as applied to revenue, but they have some validity in this case, a validity that is enhanced if "fixed" can be thought of as "certain," and "flexible" as "uncertain" or at least "less certain."

Since the contrasting budgets are being presented to illustrate different approaches to resource allocation, identical resources have been supposed for the two centers.

*Grants.* Most of this support has been pledged by foundations for the fiscal year. A small portion is still under negotiations that are expected to reach a successful conclusion.

*Workshop Income.* It is the policy of these centers to accept no more than 12 participants for each workshop and to cancel any workshop that fails to draw a minimum of seven. The average fee per registrant is $8. In the budgeting process, revenue was calculated on the conservative basis of an average attendance of eight participants for a total average income of $64 per workshop. This average, multiplied by the 510 planned workshops, yields the $32,640 income figure.

*Sales of Materials and Supplies.* The two centers customarily mark up materials and supplies for sale about 50%, which will yield approximately $4,000 on the basis of the $2,700 shown in the "flexible" column of the cost budget.

*Memberships.* Membership fees, at $12 per year, are expected to produce $3,000 from renewing and new members, totaling 250 in this fiscal year.

*Newsletter.* This monthly publication goes to members free and is available to non-members at the annual rate of $6. The estimated 150 non-member subscribers will yield income of $900.

*Total Revenue.* Both organizations are virtually sure of $52,460 of revenue from grants and funds already on hand. This amount will support 63% of the committed costs of Model I and 91% of those of Model II. To put this another way, more than $30,000, or 75%, of the program income must materialize if Model I is to meet its committed obligations. But Model II is depending on only about $5,000, or 12% of its expected program revenue, for such obligations. Model II, with lower committed expense, has a higher tolerance factor and could continue to operate much longer without cutting staff or essential services.

## Model III

Model III is a hypothetical example of a teachers' center that is sponsored by an institution such as a school district, a univserity, a parochial school system, or a coalition of organizations. The budget for Model III is presented in Table 2. The capabilities of this center are identical to those of Models I and II except for the absence of a newsletter and a membership plan.

The discussion below concentrates primarily on the distinction between "absorbed" and "incremental" costs in relation to the degree of institutional involvement that characterizes a center. Although "fixed" and "flexible" costs have not been categorized separately in Table 2, these categories could apply to Model III as well as Models I and II and may be useful considerations for people who are planning centers within a public school system or institution of higher education. It should be noted that most sponsoring institutions have a budget office that can assist the teachers' center staff and board members in planning their budget.

### Table 2

*Annual Expense and Revenue Budget for an Institutionally Supported Teachers' Center*

MODEL III

| | Incremental | Absorbed | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **EXPENSES** | | | |
| **Staff:** | | | |
| Director | $14,000 | | $14,000 |
| Professional Staff | 22,000 | $11,000 | 33,000 |
| Clerical Labor | 7,500 | 2,000 | 9,500 |
| Consultants | 1,500 | | 1,500 |
| Payroll Taxes and Benefits | 8,100 | 2,300 | 10,400 |
| Total Staff | $53,100 | $15,300 | $68,400 |
| **Other Costs:** | | | |
| Rent | | $ 3,600 | $ 3,600 |
| Utilities | | 3,000 | 3,000 |
| Telephone | $ 600 | | 600 |
| Stationery and Printing | 2,000 | | 2,000 |
| Maintenance | | 1,200 | 1,200 |
| Postage | 1,000 | | 1,000 |
| Insurance | 100 | | 100 |
| Accounting and Legal | | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| Books and Periodicals | 1,000 | | 1,000 |
| Staff Expenses | 1,000 | | 1,000 |
| Furniture and Equipment | 700 | 500 | 1,200 |
| Supplies and Materials | 3,600 | | 3,600 |
| Miscellaneous | 800 | | 800 |
| Total Other Costs | $10,800 | $ 9,300 | $20,100 |
| **Total Costs** | **$63,900** | **$24,600** | **$88,500** |
| **REVENUE** | | | |
| **Total Revenue** | | | **$88,500** |

The degree of control exercised by a sponsoring institution can range from absolute to nominal; the center's board and staff tend to retain some degree of control if the institution is not the predominant source of support. The source and degree of control is likely to be closely related to the source of financial support. For example, it is conceivable that through increasing use by a school system, a center could become more and more preoccupied with school system assignments. Despite its desire to operate on its own terms, the center's staff and facilities would be used to carry out school system programs. Although the center might still regard itself as autonomous, the school system would exercise de facto control, since the center has little time and few resources to pursue its own goals.

Other characteristics besides financial support affect the autonomy of a center. A center can be situated on city or university property, and pay no rent or utilities costs. Although such arrangements do not represent direct institutional control, they induce conditions that can solidify the mutual involvement and lead indirectly to heightened control by the institution. For instance, if the center runs its own programs to serve teachers who are not sponsored by the school or university that houses the center, the use of space and facilities not completely its own for outside paying clientele can raise questions and leave the center vulnerable to criticism.

Another indicator of degree of association with an institution may be the use of district- (or university-) employed personnel. The center might use unassigned teachers for various periods of time. For instance, teachers may propose to work at a teachers' center for a sabbatical year to conduct a research project based on experience they gained in the center's regular programs, or to conduct a project that lies outside the center's ordinary pursuits but uses some of its resources.

A multitude of variables will be found among centers that possess greater and lesser degrees of autonomy in relation to their sponsoring institutions. A brief discussion of the nature of these variables and how they interrelate may aid in the understanding of the third budget model.

If a center is housed in a school or on a campus, its space, utility, telephone, maintenance, and other occupancy-connected costs may not be identifiable because the institution's accounting system does not routinely make allocations of such costs to its various departments. On the other hand, an institution may "charge" the center for space and services on some predetermined basis.

If school system employees or university faculty members are part of the center's staff under any of a variety of arrangements, their time may or may not be charged to the center. In some instances the time of a teacher staffing the center is not charged but the time of a substitute teacher who must be brought in to replace the teacher is charged.

If a center keeps its own books, the records will be more likely to reflect most of its actual costs because the center identifies itself either as a separate entity outside the institution or as a department within it. Inside or out, the center will probably be charged in one way or another for the resources it uses. Such charges can be offset either by the institution making payments for services the center renders or by lump sum credits issued for the center's support.

In the preceding discussion of independent centers, the Model I and Model II budgets were arranged to bring out the contrasting qualities of "fixed" and "flexible" costs. In the kind of center we are concerned with now, a new set of distinctions becomes important in analyzing costs: "incremental" and "absorbed."

It costs little or nothing more to operate a school building that is fully utilized than it does to operate a building in which two or three rooms are idle. If, therefore, an existing structure has a few empty rooms into which a teachers' center is moved, no extra cost is incurred. Similarly, if two or three floating teachers are assigned to the new activity, there is no added cost. Large institutions like school systems and universities must operate with some degree of elasticity, and often the only impact of a small ancillary activity like a teachers' center is to reduce the elasticity almost imperceptibly. Costs of the kind just described, which employ existing resources, can be characterized as "absorbed."

The second classification of costs is the "incremental" expenses, or those that require the provision of additional funding. For example, if the center occupies facilities that do not belong to the institution, an out-of-pocket expense is incurred. Or, if a director must be hired because the required skills are not available in the pool of unassigned personnel, this new salary is an additional, "incremental" expense.

The budget presented in Table 2 makes certain assumptions that may or may not be valid for a particular center of this kind. The purpose of this illustration is to provide a prototype that readers can use as a basis for estimating the absorbed and the incremental costs that would occur in a given situation. As in the illustrations of the independent center budgets, line-item comments will accompany our illustration here.

### *Expenses*

*General Comment.* All the items in the column titled "absorbed" represent ongoing costs of the sponsoring institution. In this example, the accounting system has identified all of the costs incurred by or allocable to the center. Those that have been shown as "absorbed" will be offset by credits for charges made to other departments.

*Director.* This director was not drawn from the institution's payroll. The cost of the director's salary is therefore being shown as "incremental."

*Professional Staff.* To illustrate a point, it has been assumed that one of the school system's unassigned teachers has been assigned to the center. The other two staff members have been taken onto the school payroll as incremental employees. This model thus parallels Model I. It could as easily parallel Model II if the center planners choose to hire consultants on a flexible basis instead of assuming the fixed incremental costs of full-time staff.

*Clerical Labor.* This center needs a staff member with a combination of secretarial, record-keeping, office manager, and hosting-housekeeping-public relations skills; the budget assumes that a person must be newly hired for this post. In some cases, however, clerical people from the sponsoring institution might be available at no incremental cost. In addition, because some of the administrative burden could be assumed by the system's administrative departments, part of the total clerical cost has been classified as "absorbed."

*Consultants.* The need for consultants to handle special subjects is assumed to be the same as in Model I. However, if a bare-bones full-time staff is required, the consultant budget could be expanded. This cost is flexible as well as incremental.

*Benefits and Taxes.* Payrolls of large institutions are usually subject to higher fringe-benefit rates than small organizations. In this model a rate of 18% was used, compared with the 14% incurred by Models I and II.

### *Other Costs*

*Rent.* This center occupies two or three classrooms in an operating school building. The rent amount shown was arbitrarily arrived at by the system's accountants.

*Utilities and Maintenance.* These costs have been shown as "absorbed," since maintenance and utilities for the entire building would not elevate materially simply because formerly vacant rooms are now being used.

*Stationery and Printing*. All of this cost would be incremental, but could be substantially less than that an independent center might incur because of the volume-based prices available through central purchasing departments and the probable availability of the system's printing equipment. Placement within a school district or a university does not eliminate a center's need for a newsletter or calendar of events. However, the membership program of the independent center has been eliminated.

*Insurance*. As a small addition to a much larger entity, the center would have little or no effect on the institution's insurance premiums. Some cost for workmen's compensation insurance for the incremental staff has been budgeted as an incremental cost.

*Accounting and Legal*. All of the accounting would probably be computerized and maintained by the system's accounting department, which, in any large organization, is accustomed to absorbing reasonably fluctuating workloads without adding or reducing staff. The same comment applies to legal expense.

*Books and Periodicals*. All of this cost would be incremental because of the center's unique interests. Some reduction in expense might be possible through the services of central purchasing.

*Staff Expenses*. These costs would be incremental, since they would be incurred by incremental staff.

*Furniture and Equipment*. This expense has been more or less arbitrarily split between the two classifications. No doubt some used surplus items could be appropriated, but others peculiar to the center's needs would have to be purchased.

*Supplies and Materials*. All of these expenses would be incremental.

*Total Costs*. In this illustration it has been estimated through item-by-item planning that, at a total cost of $88,500, or about $4,500 less than the budget of Model I and about the same budget as for Model II, a wholly or partly institutionally-sponsored center could be maintained that is capable of offering the same amount of instruction and teacher counseling as the independent center. It is very important to note, however, that many of the already established, ongoing resources of the institution can be converted to such a center's use without requiring additional funds; therefore, this center can be set up and operated for 65% of the cost, in terms of new funding, of the independent center.

### *Revenue*

No attempt has been made here to break the income down into its possible ingredients, since it is assumed that the institution will be the principal funder.

### *Summary*

Because of the absorption aspect of some of the costs that have been discussed, care must be exercised in expressing cost in terms of the units of output. But if we can think of cost as the amount an institution would spend to maintain this center in excess of the institution's normal budgetary requirements, the cost per workshop session in the example represented by Model III would be $63,900 ÷ 510 or the total of the incremental costs divided by the number of workshops planned. This cost amounts to about $125 per session. The cost per session in Model I or II (with the costs of newsletter and memberships removed for purposes of comparison) would be $175.

The situations that have been illustrated here do not pretend to be average or even to represent any actual cases. They are, nonetheless, possible and feasible arrangements. And they present patterns that can be used for examining a broad array of options and putting together those options in almost unlimited combinations.

## Part 2: The Advisory Board as a Resource*

The purpose of the Advisory Board Checklist (Figure 1) is to provide a mechanism for analyzing the extent to which a teachers' center advisory board is used as a resource.

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*Although Mr. Steets formed the ideas and opinions expressed here from his visits and interviews at four independent teachers' centers where the boards were functioning like the board of directors of a community project or small business, his advice may be helpful to any center that has an advisory board. The checklist and accompanying comments were written before the 1978 Office of Education Teacher Centers Program funds became available to establish centers. We expect that by the end of their first year of operation the policy boards of the 60 new centers established according to the guidelines of Public Law 94-482 – boards with a different structure from that described here – will also have a wealth of experience and advice to share.

## Figure 1

*Advisory Board Checklist*

1. Number of members on advisory board ____________________

2. Skills/experience represented on board:

    Education:
      Classroom teachers ☐
      Representatives of Teachers' Organizations ☐
      Administrators ☐
      College/University faculty ☐
    Accounting ☐
    Law ☐
    Business ☐
    Clergy ☐
    Parents ☐
    Medical/Psychiatry/Counseling ☐
    Community Service ☐
    Banking/Accounting ☐
    Advertising/Public Relations/Press ☐
    Architects/Designers/Carpenters ☐
    Printers ☐
    Other (specify) ____________________

3. Frequency of board meetings:

    Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ As Scheduled ☐

4. Is an agenda distributed in advance of board meetings? Yes ☐ No ☐

5. Who chairs board meetings?

    Chairperson elected by board members for a specified term ☐
    Director of teachers' center ☐
    Rotating chairperson ☐

6. Is the director of the teachers' center a voting member of the board? Yes ☐ No ☐

    Other teachers' center staff? Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Is it a practice to maintain standing committees of the board? Yes ☐ No ☐

8. If standing committees are maintained, check those now in existence:
   - Budget ☐
   - Personnel ☐
   - Community Relations ☐
   - Fund Raising ☐
   - Program ☐
   - Education ☐
   - Publicity ☐
   - Facilities ☐
   - Other (specify) ______________________________

9. Is it the practice to appoint special committees of the board from time to time? Yes ☐ No ☐

10. Are some or all board members accessible between meetings? Yes ☐ No ☐
    Available for frequent committee meetings? Yes ☐ No ☐

11. Has the board of directors approved a set of bylaws? Yes ☐ No ☐

12. As part of the bylaws, or separately, has a statement of the teachers' center's philosophy, policies, and scope been drawn up and approved by the board? Yes ☐ No ☐

13. Are annual financial plans presented to the board before or at the beginning of the year for approval? Yes ☐ No ☐

14. Are annual financial and program reports presented to the board for discussion at the end of the year? Yes ☐ No ☐

15. As a regular part of meeting agendas, are committee chairpersons required to make a report on the activities of their committees? Yes ☐ No ☐

Many teachers' centers were established through the initiative of a small group of teachers whose backgrounds were similar and who were concerned with the quality of education for teachers' and children. It is common to find that the enormous workload of the beginning weeks and months of a teachers' center was shared by a nucleus of dedicated volunteers, many of whom evolved eventually as staff employees on a full- or part-time basis. The habits of shared responsibilities acquired in the formative stages of teachers' centers have carried over into the ongoing organization through the adroit selection and operation of an advisory board, which supplements the hands and heads of the staff both in quantity and quality.

It is important for the board to provide a large variety of resources and perspectives. A board that is top-heavy with any particular professional background—including education—must guard against redundancy and against stalemate by clique, conflict, or the intrusion of external politics. Item 2 on the checklist enumerates skills or experiences that are either continuously or from time to time relevant to the teachers' centers' affairs. An attorney on the board, for example, would be available to help write or negotiate contracts and leases. The format and data content of monthly financial reports, cash projections, and annual budgets should be the responsibility of a member with accounting or banking skills, as should the temporary investment of surplus funds and the operation of checking, payroll, and savings accounts. A business executive could offer knowledge about efficient operation, personnel administration, and cost-conscious attitudes. For the preparation and execution of brochures and publicity pieces, advertising and public relations experience would be of tremendous help. In the area of community service a wide range of backgrounds exist to be drawn upon. Elected officials and representatives of government agencies can lend their name and "connections" as well as their understanding of the "labyrinthian bureaucracy."

The creation of a capable and versatile board does not lead automatically to its maximum usefulness and productivity. Effective leadership by the center's staff is required to help board members participate productively in the work and policy-making of the center.

Meetings must be held with sufficient frequency to assure not only that members are sufficiently aware of what is happening at the center but also to keep the center's affairs up front in their minds.

There seem to be two major pitfalls the center director must guard against in order to help the advisory board work effectively. The first of these is represented in the principle that a group responsibility is nobody's responsibility. Responsibility must be delegated either through the establishment of standing committees, each with its board member chairperson, or through the assignment to each member of the primary concern for a defined area of the teachers' center's affairs. Through this procedure responsibility is not only felt but also—most importantly—exercised. Occasional contacts initiated by the center director between meetings serve to remind the board member of his or her responsibility—that a certain area *is* the board member's concern and the center needs his or her active participation.

The second pitfall lies in the tendency of some center directors to dominate the board. This phenomenon occurs most often in teachers' centers that were launched by an individual who almost single-handedly made decisions, opened the center, did the work, established practices and policies, and feels—with justification—a proprietary interest in the going concern. As desirable as it may be for this type of director to continue to operate the center with a free hand, such a policy may carry intolerable penalties. Difficult organizational problems brought to the board for solution may be discussed but not solved owing to the board's confidence that the director, since he or she has solved all of the problems so far, will solve this one too. If the center director so cherishes power that he or she doesn't demand that the board take its rightful share, the advisory board may willingly concede.

The teachers' center director who complains of a weak advisory board may be indulging in practices that contribute to the condition. If the director chairs all meetings, he or she may be constantly influencing the members' thoughts towards his or her point of view. Abdication by the board is the almost inevitable result. If the director seldom or never contacts board members between meetings, this image of self-sufficiency is reinforced in the minds of board members.

In most cases where "non-participating" advisory boards already exist, the slate can be wiped clean and a fresh start made by

- Appointing a committee to redefine the role of the board.
- Bringing the resulting statement to the full board for discussion, revision, and adoption.

Although we have so far emphasized the delegation of responsibility, the concept of the advisory board as a responsible body that must function as a cohesive group must not be overlooked. Such a concept cannot flourish unless each board member first accepts being one part of the whole and is committed to functioning cooperatively with fellow members. The creation and approval of bylaws brings into play the group level of board activity. Establishing policy requires the consensus and consent of all and, very importantly, assures consistency of decision, action, and direction. The annual preview and approval of the coming year's financial plan, the monthly discussion of program and financial conditions, and the annual review of the year's work are all essential and proper whole-board activities.

To summarize the main points of this discussion:

- An advisory board can be an important resource to a teachers' center if thoughtfully constituted and skillfully used.
- Individual participation is difficult to secure without delegating responsibility.
- Dominance by a single individual tends to discourage and inhibit the sharing of responsibility and work.
- Group cooperation and concern must be brought to bear on matters of general importance to the teachers' center, including its overall operation.

One final word: Too often people are invited to join an advisory board without a prior discussion of what will be expected of them. While a thorough explanation of the job and its responsibilities may turn some prospects off, those who accept with the full knowledge of what is expected will take on the responsibility with enthusiasm and high prospects to succeed.

PHOTO BY RUTH KREITZMAN

# IS THERE LIFE AFTER SEED MONEY?

*Harriet Bograd**

This paper is a case study of the process by which the Teacher Center, Inc. in New Haven, Connecticut, planned and implemented a funding strategy that enabled us to continue to expand, even with greatly reduced foundation support. We had been given foundation "seed money" for five years beyond our founding in 1971. By 1976, we needed to find new sources of support to enable the center to continue to exist.

In planning a funding strategy, we evaluated many possible sources of funds and decided which ones to pursue, thinking carefully about how best to use our fund-raising time and effort. We kept working to clarify our values and program priorities and considered carefully how obtaining funds from each possible source might affect our ability to implement these values and priorities.

We believe that many people who participate in the work of other teachers' centers or in providing funds for them may be interested in our experiences and our thinking. We do not assume that our particular funding strategy would be appropriate in other settings. Although it appears to be working for us, I have been cautious about trying to spell out the lessons others can learn from this paper. Readers will find different aspects of the paper relevant or useful in thinking about their own situations.

A note to beginners: If you are working to start a new teachers' center, please remember that our present program and funding strategy is the result of seven years of very gradual expansion. We operated for six months without outside funding. We borrowed space, office machines, and materials, and worked with volunteers. Then we received a small grant to hire a part-time program coordinator. We believe that it is important not to grow too fast, and to think hard about our relationship to money.

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*Support for the preparation of this paper was provided by the New Haven and Ford Foundations.[1]

We want to have enough money to have the freedom to carry out programs we believe in, but we want the autonomy to make careful decisions about our own priorities, our use of resources, and our style of working. It appears that the strategy of looking to many diverse funding sources preserves this autonomy. We are trying not to depend on any one source for our future survival.

## Background

The Teacher Center, Inc. opened in September 1971, received its first foundation grant in January 1972 (for $14,600 per year), and has grown to an annual 1978 budget of about $130,000 (including $25,000 in-kind contribution from the CETA program). Its basic support came from foundations during the first five years. Because that support was generous and predictable, and because expenses were kept very low, the founders were able to develop the Center and provide free or low cost services to teachers, parents, and school systems.

By 1976, our supporting foundations believed they had done their share to nurture the Center. They had helped us demonstrate that a teachers' center is a valuable and needed resource; now they wanted us to figure out how we could support ourselves without their continuing help. The Hazen Foundation's $18,500 grant for 1976, its fifth year of support, was its last; the New World Foundation, after four years, planned to cut back in 1977 from $15,000 to $7,500.

To help us deal with our impending financial crisis, the New Haven Foundation included funding to pay for financial development in its first grant to us in 1976. The Teacher Center employed me half-time for six months to work on its funding prospects. I am a lawyer, had been a member of the board of the Teacher Center since its beginning, and had had 13 years' experience in funding and program development for non-profit organizations. After the initial six months, the half-time program developer position (including fund raising) was continued in the permanent staff.

## Building Credibility

I was aware when I began this task that a number of characteristics of the Teacher Center were likely to make us "credible" to funding sources, making the funding work easier than it is for many struggling organizations. The

Center is incorporated and tax-exempt. We have a superb director, Corinne Levin; a competent and dedicated board made up primarily of teachers and parents; and an excellent staff of advisors. The Center is actively used by teachers, college faculty and students, and many others; nearly everyone who has used it is an enthusiastic ally. People with a wide range of teaching styles and personal philosophies feel welcome and supported at the Center. Our physical environment is creative and exciting, thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Our financial records are in good order and audited, and our program has been carefully documented with records of who has used the Center and with annual reports. We received a very favorable written evaluation by an independent consultant employed by the New World Foundation. A national journal, *Educational Leadership*, published an article about the Center in March 1976.

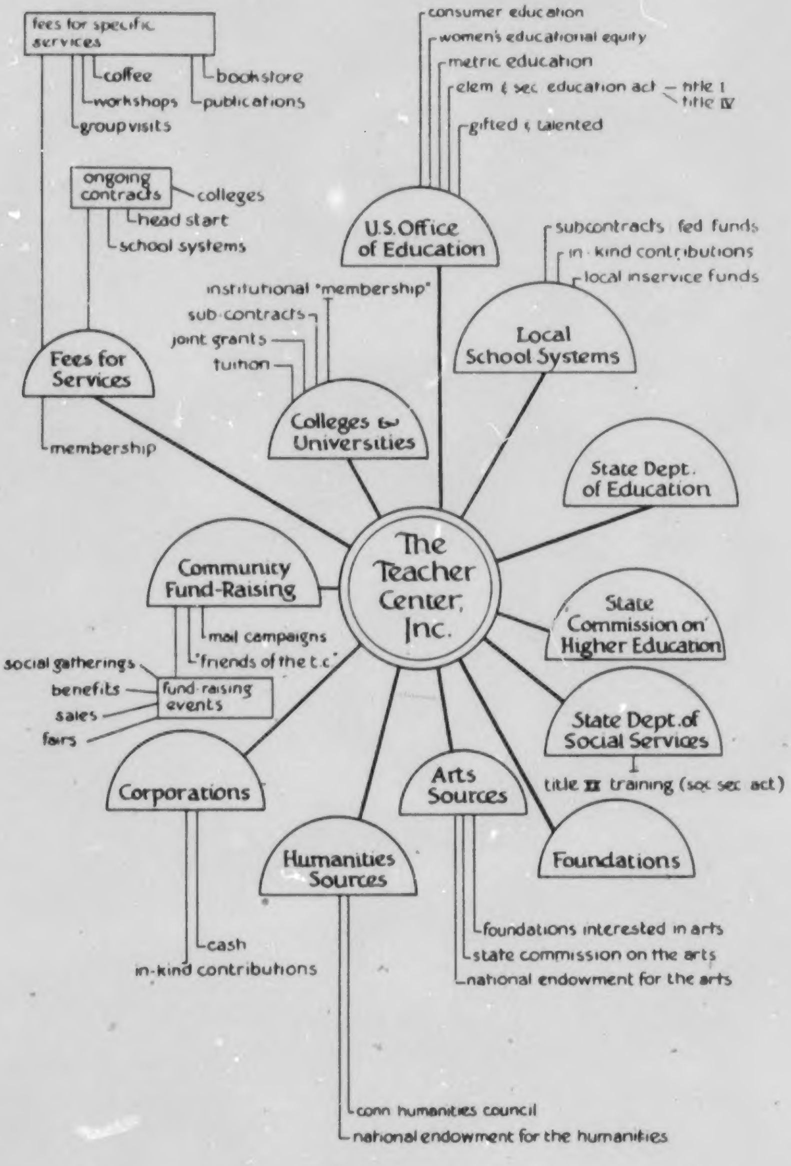
## Finding Funding Resources

We began our work by "brainstorming" all the possible sources of support that we could think of. I made a diagram to illustrate those possibilities (see Figure 1) and found out about each one, deciding which were worth pursuing and then following through on those that seemed most promising. For each source, we considered the following questions, among others;

1. How much time, money, and effort will it take to seek funds from this source?
2. If we pursue this source, how likely is it that we will obtain funds? Are we competing with others? How many? How would we compare with competitors?
3. How will our program and organization be affected by receiving funds from this source?
   a. Will this source help us carry out our work in the informal, supportive, integrated way in which we want to work? Or will it make us become bureaucratic, overly specialized, and less accessible to teachers and parents?
   b. What record-keeping, reporting, and accounting procedures does this source require? Are they simple and sensible, or do they entail unreasonable amounts of paper work and bureaucratic procedures?
   c. Will funds from this source necessitate program expansion? Is the expansion in a direction in which we want to move? Is the Center competent as an organization to take on this new task?
4. How much funding are we likely to obtain from this source, and how much

**Figure 1**

*Diagram of Possible Funding Sources*


fees for specific services
coffee
workshops
group visits
bookstore
publications
ongoing contracts
colleges
head start
school systems
Fees for Services
membership
consumer education
women's educational equity
metric education
elem & sec education act — title I
title IV
gifted & talented
U.S. Office of Education
subcontracts fed funds
in-kind contributions
local inservice funds
Local School Systems
institutional "membership"
sub-contracts
joint grants
tuition
Colleges & Universities
State Dept. of Education
The Teacher Center, Inc.
Community Fund-Raising
mail campaigns
"friends of the t.c."
social gatherings
benefits
sales
fairs
fund-raising events
State Commission on Higher Education
State Dept. of Social Services
title XX training (soc sec act)
Corporations
cash
in-kind contributions
Arts Sources
foundations interested in arts
state commission on the arts
national endowment for the arts
Foundations
Humanities Sources
conn humanities council
national endowment for the humanities

of it can be used to pay for our basic program of drop-in use, workshops, and advisory services to teachers and parents?

a. If the funds from this source are designated for a special project, does the budget allow for management costs and other overhead related to this project?

b. Does this source have any requirements for matching funds? Will those requirements drain financial, time, or energy resources away from the Center's basic program priorities?

Below are some of the things we found out about different funding sources, as well as how we found them out, and what steps we decided to take.

## U.S. Office of Education

One of my first steps was to investigate *Federal Catalogue of Domestic Assistance*, the basic research tool for federal funds. (I have located up-to-date copies in the grants offices of the local school system and in nearby colleges. State and municipal grants offices also have copies.)

The catalog was helpful in providing background on the various programs of federal support to education, the amount of money is available for each, and the procedures for applying. I noted that in 1976 there were new federal programs for metric education, consumer education, and women's educational equity, and that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) had been amended so that educational innovations would now be covered under Title IV-C rather than Title III. There were also federal funds for programs for the gifted and talented through the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped.

I contacted the offices in Washington that administered these programs and sent for guidelines and application forms. In general, by late February it was too late to apply to most of these sources for the 1976-77 academic year.

My research also confirmed my hunch about federal funds. The federal government generally does not give funds for education directly to non-profit organizations. The few exceptions to this pattern are grants or contracts for special research or demonstration projects of national significance or for national or regional technical assistance. The few programs that are open to non-profit groups, such as consumer education, are intensely competitive. Most federal education money is paid to states, to local school systems, or to colleges and universities. Often the money is given to the states to give out to local schools or colleges.

Local school systems or colleges can, however, subcontract with non-profit organizations like the Teacher Center to help carry out a federally funded project. It is very helpful to understand the relevant federal laws, regulations, and application procedures when approaching schools and colleges to explore possible subcontracts on federally supported projects.

We decided to pay attention to federal funding opportunities for the future, but made no plans to seek direct federal funding in 1976.

### Local School Systems

Soon after I began my job I met with the director of program planning and the director of inservice education for the New Haven Public Schools. We already had a contract with New Haven for $8,000 for 1976, and had applied for $12,000 for staff training in 1977 under Title VII of the Emergency School Aid Act (related to the reduction of racial tension in the schools). By the time I approached the two district officials in March, it was too late to develop additional joint proposals for federal funding for the coming academic year, except for projects funded under the Women's Educational Equity Act. After several meetings we decided that national competition for this funding was too intense, and our own experience in the area too limited, to make it worthwhile to spend the time required to prepare a good proposal. The work we were already doing on the reduction of sexism in education could be continued without a large budget; a federal grant in this area might be a distraction.

I did find the meetings useful in renewing contacts with school officials as I asked for their advice on our funding future and learned more about their plans. We left open the possibility that from time to time they would contract with us for specific training services.

We have continued for three years to have a subcontract with New Haven Public Schools to train staff participating in Title VII projects. The contract has enabled us to provide sustained support, training, and advisory services to a group of school staff members over several years, both in centralized workshops and in their own settings.

I also met with the person in charge of federal grants in one suburban school system and discussed many possibilities. This district seemed likely to receive inservice training funds through Title I of ESEA. If it did, the district might use some of the money to hire us.

We were delighted to find that a key administrator in this suburban system was eager to provide support to his teachers and was open to using the Teacher Center as a resource. We decided to ask this system to join us and a nearby state college in an application to the State Commission on Higher Education for a collaborative program. (More on this below.)

It seemed clear at this point that we needed to start a "marketing" program to encourage school districts in the area to use inservice training funds, either from their local budget or through special state or federal grants, to hire us. However, this task seemed enormous, requiring personal contacts and correspondence with 29 or more districts. We saved this effort for the future and set about pursuing more immediate and promising leads. In the meantime, to prepare for the future task, I obtained from the Connecticut State Department of Education an address and phone list of all the superintendents in the state and a computer printout showing how much funding each school district received under each federal program. As an introductory contact, we sent the 29 superintendents in our region copies of our May-June and summer bulletins and an invitation to a lecture given at the Teacher Center by Ivan Illich.

### State Department of Education

I spent one afternoon making telephone calls to the State Department of Education to find out whom to contact and what funds were available. I learned that while no state money was available for teachers' centers, the state handled large amounts of federal funds that it generally must pass on to local education agencies. If we wanted to receive these funds, therefore, we would have to subcontract with local school systems or with a regional educational resource center. We obtained copies of state guidelines for various federal education programs and a state government directory, and found out that the man who coordinates federal programs in the State Department of Education was very helpful.

We decided that sooner or later we would spend more time with people in the State Department of Education, getting them to visit us, and finding out about their future plans. But there was no immediate prospect of funds.

### State Commission on Higher Education

We heard that the Commission on Higher Education had a small amount of state funds to support collaborative efforts among school systems, teacher training institutions, and sometimes community agencies.

When we first heard of the program, we decided not to bother with it, because the grants would be small (maximum $7,000) and we expected the proposal writing process, involving three institutions, to be an enormous problem. But a woman in the state agency encouraged us to give it a try. We decided to plan one meeting each with people from a local school system and a teacher training college and see what we could come up with.

We took the position that the college faculty and students had been using the Teacher Center for years without paying for it, and that since the state college did not have funds in its own budget to pay us, they could help by backing us on this proposal. We were delighted with the response. In addition to agreeing to support the proposal, a number of college faculty members agreed to donate their time to offer Teacher Center workshops and advisory services in return for our having college classes visit the Teacher Center. The Teacher Center, along with college faculty, agreed to provide training to the kindergarten teachers in the school system. And the school system would provide matching support by granting released time and travel expenses for its teachers.

Thus in a few days of meetings and proposal writing, we were able to come up with a neat little package and develop a stronger working relationship with these institutions. This time seemed to be well spent, but in May we found out that the state legislature never appropriated the expected funds for this program.

## Colleges and Universities

In the past we had worked informally with a number of colleges and universities and developed a favorable reputation and many allies.

I met with a grants officer in one college and an assistant dean of education in another to explore how we could work together. We talked about the possibility of jointly offering credit for courses at the Teacher Center; how to divide the tuition for such courses between the colleges and the Center; whether the colleges could pay for the use of our facilities by students and faculty in non-credit programs; and whether the colleges and the Center could apply to federal, state, or foundation sources for grants or contracts.

Collaboration is important to us because many federal and state grants and contracts are available only to colleges and universities and/or to local school systems and are not available directly to non-profit organizations. A non-profit group like the Teacher Center can be a sub-contractor in many such projects, however, and an alliance with a teachers' center can strengthen the ability of a college or school system to perform the contracted work with teachers.

In 1978, we have arranged for a student in a local business school to type for us part-time. The school's federally funded work-study program pays 80% of her hourly wage. This secretarial school gives excellent training; students come to us with very good skills. Our administrative assistant provides training and supervision.

### State Department of Social Services

The most promising contact we made in 1976 was with the State Department of Social Services (formerly the Welfare Department). Under the new Title XX of the Social Security Act, the federal government would reimburse the state for 75% of all money spent on the training of people working in social services programs funded under Title XX. This program represented an unlimited pool of federal money that could be applied to training of staff in daycare centers for low-income children. (Since the state did not have the money to pay the 25% local match, the Center made a gift of 25% to the state, which then paid the Center 100%.)

We negotiated with Title XX planners to obtain a contract as "experts" to provide training to daycare center staff members. Early childhood education had always been a major focus of our work at the Teacher Center and we were committed to working with teachers of inner-city children. Thus this program was very appealing to us. Since it was a brand new federal program, state officials were still figuring out how to work with it. We were fortunate to find a state official who knew about the Teacher Center and was eager to obtain our training services. He and I worked closely on interpreting the guidelines and making them work in our situation.

The Title XX training program has become our largest source of funding ($39,106 in 1977; more than $65,000 in 1978). Under Title XX, we provide training to staff members of group and family daycare programs that are funded by this title of the Social Security Act. We are able to work intensively, over a long period of time, with daycare personnel through workshops, courses, and advisory services at the daycare centers and in family daycare homes.

In 1976-77, the Center contracted directly with the State Department of Social Services as "experts" under the Title XX training regulations. When the federal officials subsequently began to interpret the regulations more narrowly, we concluded that our program could be more flexible if we joined with a college or university program as an "educational institution." With the support of state officials, we contacted the University of Bridgeport, which has a large, well-managed Title XX training program. After examining our records and the quality of our program, Bridgeport agreed to make our Title XX program officially a branch of the University. Since July 1977, we have operated our Title XX program as a subcontract with the University of Bridgeport. The liaison with the University has also enabled us to offer university credit for selected Teacher Center courses.

When we negotiated the Title XX contract, we carefully worked out with state officials our record-keeping, reporting, and auditing procedures. We developed a set of forms for documenting individual training events (sign-in sheets for participants) and staff time (time sheets) and for summarizing our records in quarterly financial reports and quarterly progress reports. I worked with the entire Teacher Center staff to make certain the forms made sense and were easy to fill out and summarize. Everyone on the staff understands that these records are the basis for collecting our income; we all take them very seriously.

We chose to negotiate a contract on a "unit-of-service basis," rather than an actual cost or other basis, because this procedure simplified our bookeeping and gave us more freedom to use funds effectively. On the unit-of-service basis, we submit bills based on the number of days of face-to-face training provided and the number of days of curriculum development and preparation. In 1977-78, we billed at $125 per day. (The Center actually contributes 27% of the $125). With this procedure, the state and federal governments are entitled to audit our records of services provided, but not our records of costs and income.

## Foundations

Although we were trying to diversify our sources of support and not to rely on foundations as heavily as in the past, we were aware that foundation funds tend to be the most flexible and easiest to manage of the possible sources of support. A relatively short proposal, a simple budget, and an annual financial report and progress report are usually all the paper work required. These requirements contrast sharply with the lengthy negotiations, quarterly reports, provisions for matching funds, and detailed records and accounts that are needed to manage, for example, the Title XX training contract.

We hoped that the New Haven Foundation would continue to support us for at least two more years. When the Center first opened, the foundation had refused to fund us, apparently because it was uncomfortable about our lack of formal relationship with the New Haven public school system. But when we applied for 1976, a member of the central school administrative staff approached the foundation with us to support our application. Now we could show them a history of cooperative efforts with the schools.

The New Haven Foundation has continued to give us $20,000 each year for general program support. Although relatively small in comparison with our total $130,000 income, this funding gives us the freedom to develop new programs, engage in long-range planning, and respond to community needs rapidly and flexibly. We are able to welcome without charge individual teachers, parents, and others who drop in at the Teacher Center to use materials or talk with an advisor.

The New Haven Foundation traditionally has not funded any one organization for more than three or four years (1978 is our third year of support from them). However, its Distribution Committee has been reconsidering this policy and seems prepared to make exceptions in special cases. We hope the foundation will find that the Teacher Center program merits its continuing support. We expect the foundation will give favorable consideration to the fact that its $20,000 enables us to raise another $110,000 to conduct a rich program, thereby "multiplying" the effectiveness of its funds.

In addition to foundations interested in the arts, a specialty of the Center, we explored foundations that target funds to Connecticut. We found one foundation that is located in another state but has a group of board members living in New Haven. A representative of this foundation came to visit us and agreed to invite other board members to meet us.

To do research on foundations, I contacted the Yale University Office of Special Projects and Foundations, which has a well-stocked library of reference materials. In this library, I used the *Foundation Directory, Foundation Grants Index, Foundation News, Taft Information System,* and annual reports of individual foundations. (The Foundation Center, 888 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10019, is the authoritative library on foundations and has branches around the country. Contact it to find out the location of the branch that is nearest to you. But also find out whether any community foundation, college, other large non-profit organization, school system, or other government agency has a grants office with a good reference library.)

## Matching Grants

In the past we received small matching grants from the Connecticut Foundation on the Arts ($2,500) and the National Endowment for the Arts ($12,500) to support our arts and crafts advisory program and our work in environmental design. We worked for five years with architects, designers, artists and crafts people, including faculty and students from the Yale School of Art and Architecture. The arts and environmental design focus was one of the most exciting aspects of the Teacher Center.

A few dilemmas puzzled us as we explored funding sources related to the arts. First, we were committed to interdisciplinary inquiry. We emphasized use of the environment or use of arts and crafts as an integral part of curriculum in reading, math, science, social studies. Because of our interdisciplinary focus, all part of our program and budget were implicated in our efforts to integrate curriculum. To promote collaboration between teachers and artists, we needed to have on our staff of advisors a balance of teachers and artists.

This need was a problem because the state and federal arts agencies were interested in paying only the salaries of artists and had difficulty paying for such staff members as a math, science, or early childhood advisor. Moreover, government arts agencies usually pay only 50% matching funds. Thus, to obtain additional arts funding, we would have to spend more on hiring artists and drain resources away from other basic priorities.

We investigated the availability of foundation funding related to arts in education programs, sent for the annual reports of several possibly relevant foundations, wrote preliminary proposals, made personal contacts, and tried to get foundation representatives to visit our Center. So far these efforts have not been very fruitful, although the Center did receive a $2,000 grant from the Connecticut Foundation on the Arts in 1977.

The Connecticut Humanities Council, an agency established with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, has 50% matching funds for collaboration between college humanities professors and community people related to programs on the theme, "Being Heard—People, Public Issues, and the Humanities." We contacted this agency, got on its mailing list, and obtained its literature. The Humanities Council is unusual in its effort to make its application process accessible to inexperienced groups; it has even published a manual on how to prepare an application for its funds.

We decided not to pursue Humanities Council funds in 1976. Before we raised special grants for extra projects, we needed to make sure that our basic priorities would be paid for over the next few years. Planning for a grant from the Humanities Council would have drained our energy.

## Our Program Development Strategy

Our decision about the Humanities Council illustrates our philosophy about program development. We have always started by doing things simply, at low cost, because people involved with the Center wanted to do them. People with a special need, interest, or resource get together at the Teacher Center, and our director and staff support their efforts. We may spend small amounts out of our general budget to pay people to pursue their interests. For example, we may pay someone $25 to do a workshop on making games, or on the use of cooking in the curriculum, or on sexism in education. Out of such small informal efforts we often develop more formal projects, such as publishing books on games and on cooking.

We try to make sure that our program develops organically out of the needs and resources of Center participants rather than as an arbitrary response to funds that are available for a special project. However, in 1977 we did receive $3,125 in matching funds from the Connecticut Humanities Council for a conference on "Literacy and the Inner-City Child." Although small matching grants like this require disproportionately large amounts of proposal writing, record keeping, and report writing, this particular grant grew out of the Center's program and helped enhance our credibility and prestige in the community. The Connecticut Humanities Council guidelines stimulated us to move in new directions, to collaborate with faculty members in sociolinguistics and Afro-American studies, and to publish a conference report.

## Corporations

In 1976 it was suggested that we explore corporate giving as a source of support because in some communities large corporations have a budget for community contributions. One advantage of corporate giving is that once a corporation gives to a particular agency, it is likely to continue that support year after year. However, since corporations tend to be more conservative than foundations, they are less interested in innovation that in stable, sound programs.

To investigate this source, I went to see a man who has been a leader in the philanthropic community in New Haven. He is a lawyer who has participated in fund-raising campaigns for many of the creative arts organizations in the New Haven area.

He told me that in all his years of experience, he has never known any of the large publicly owned corporations in the New Haven area to support an individual community arts program or other community project. The corporations give to the United Way, and possibly to the hospital, and then they stop. They are afraid that if they give to one small program, they will be deluged with requests from all the others.

Because of this advice, we crossed large corporations off our list of possible leads. I was grateful for being able to benefit from the experience of other people in this area. However, I know that teachers' centers in other communities have obtained grants from corporations.

I found that although large corporations are unlikely to help by contributing cash, many of them are willing to contribute in-kind resources. The phone company, for example, formerly had its own printing shop, and would print brochures and pamphlets for local groups without charge. Many corporations contribute scrap materials to our recycling center.

## Community Fund Raising

Our Center had never put energy into fund raising in the local community through mail campaigns, theater benefits, bake sales, rummage sales, or other volunteer-run fund-raising activities. In 1976 we reconsidered whether we should get involved in such efforts.

We were concerned about the time and effort it would take to organize a volunteer group to work on fund raising. We have numerous volunteers who help develop displays at the Center, write books on curriculum ideas that we publish, and spread the word about the Center. But the teachers, parents, college faculty members, and students who have worked with us are not the people in the community who like to spend time on fund raising.

The ambivalence about community fund raising is also connected with a hard-to-describe fear that somehow our "identity" will be adversely affected by the wrong kind of fund-raising effort. We want to be sure that teachers and parents who use the Teacher Center feel that the place belongs to them.

In 1977 we began a membership program that we are now working to expand. Members contribute at least $7.50 per year or "in-kind" services and are entitled to borrow books and materials from the Center, receive our mailings, and to attend special members' events.

We held two wine and cheese parties for members this spring (1978); 50 persons attended the last one. Through these parties we have finally identified a small committee that is planning to work on outreach, public relations, and community fund raising. Although the wine and cheese parties do not bring in large sums of money, they help us reach out to new members, build community support, and foster a network of people with shared concerns about improving the schools.

## Fees for Our Services

We also struggled with the question of whether to charge for our services. We had to convince ourselves that it is legitimate to charge, since we need this support in order to continue to offer high quality, needed services. It does not appear that our fees prevent teachers and parents who have limited incomes from using the Center.

For the first few years, all our services to individuals were free. We didn't even charge for coffee. The only exception was a tuition fee for our three-week summer workshop. We did charge nominal fees to school systems that contracted with us to do inservice training workshops and to a Head Start state training center that hired us as consultants.

For several years we made scrap materials collected from industry available at no charge in our recycling corner. Few people used them, however. Then we posted signs with prices ("25c a handful"), and people seemed to feel freer to take things. Recently we realized that many people working for schools and community programs cannot simply take handfuls of recycled materials and get reimbursed. If they want to make purchases from our recycling center, they need a price list and a billing procedure. Therefore our staff got to work developing a "Teacher Center Store Catalogue," which lists quantities and prices of paper, plastics, fabrics, and so forth. We are currently distributing these catalogues so that program staff can place orders. (Sorry, no mail orders.) We hope this procedure will substantially increase our recycling income and at the same time increase the usefulness of the recycling program to the community.

In 1976 we began to charge small fees for most of our activities. We charge $2 per person for workshops, 25c for coffee, and a small mark-up for books, homemade toys, and Teacher Center T-shirts in our bookstore. We have published a book called *Using Foods*, which brings us small royalties from the publisher and a larger amount for the copies we sell for $5 at the Center (*Using Crafts*, *Using Space*, and *Using Games* will soon be available). "Is There Life After Seed Money?" and proceedings from our "Literacy and the Inner-City Child" conference are available for $2 each. We charged $25 when a college class or other group came to the Teacher Center for a field visit and $50 if we ran a workshop for a visiting group. We do not charge individual teachers, parents, and students for the use of the Center on a drop-in basis in the afternoon or for individual meetings with our advisors during that time. The reason we do not charge individuals is that foundation and Teacher Center funds support this.

These fees, which totalled more than $7,000 in 1977, do not begin to cover the costs of keeping the Teacher Center open and staffed. Now, when we negotiate contracts with large organizations such as school systems, colleges, and government agencies, we are beginning to insist on a price that pays not only for the services of a particular advisor on a particular day, but also for the total use of Teacher Center resources. We are beginning to ask people to pay for the use of our space, curriculum materials, and equipment, for the director's time in coordinating any activity, and for something toward the general Teacher Center program. We try to emphasize that this expense is not "overhead" and that simply having the Teacher Center available to school staffs, college students and faculty, and others is a service that these organizations must contribute to.

## CETA

During 1978, federal funds from CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, Public Service Employment Program) have paid for two full-time staff members, related fringe benefits, and $1,500 worth of equipment and supplies. To obtain these positions, we had to submit a proposal to the City of New Haven, the CETA "prime sponsor" in our area.

The two staff members paid by CETA have been a valuable addition to our Center. They staff the drop-in program, help expand the recycling program, and work on outreach and curriculum development. (Editor's note: The CETA program authorized by fall 1978 legislation is much smaller, more restrictive with respect to eligibility of employers and employees, and has provision for salaries lower than earlier CETA programs.)

## The Federal Teacher Centers Program

After a long investigation of the Office of Education Teacher Centers Program, our board decided not to pursue this funding. We decided that the effort would be too costly in time and energy, given the fierce competition for funds, the small likelihood that we would be funded, and the fact that funding would end in three years.

## Conclusions

In 1976 and 1977, before considering our refunding requests, the New Haven Foundation hired an independent evaluator to examine our program. The foundation was especially concerned about the process by which the board of directors and staff make both short- and long-range plans, set objectives, and assess progress. In June 1976, the Ford Foundation sent a consultant, an experienced and perceptive businessman, to help us analyze our financial picture. He urged us to break down our income and expenses in terms of our various programs and then to evaluate which programs are income-producing and which are not. We had to face the fact that if a program costs more than it earns, we must either find a way to support it or cancel the program.

In response to these concerns, we developed a number of procedures. In the summer of 1977, a committee of board and staff members searched through our old proposals and other documents, added new ideas and developed a long list of potential objectives. Then the board, at an all-day retreat, grouped these into high, medium, and low priorities. Each year the board and staff will study these lists again, rate our progress on each objective, and reexamine our priorities. Such a process enables board and staff to communicate better, to stop and appreciate what we have accomplished, to reconsider past objectives, and to share ideas about new objectives.

The last several years have been a time of "financial consciousness-raising" for the board and staff of the Teacher Center. We started out with the assumption that if we paid too much attention to how to bring in money we would become just a "consulting firm" and would lose track of our values and priorities.

We have discovered that it *is* possible to think seriously about money and to make careful decisions about when to charge for our services and when to do things for free; when to apply for a new grant or contract and when not to apply; when to try to expand our program and when to work on consolidating past gains.

Although we have not translated our accounting system into a technical "program-budgeting" system, we have learned to make program decisions with finances in mind, just as we make financial decisions based on program goals and philosophy. We believe many teachers' centers and other community groups could benefit from a similar effort to come to terms with money.

Funding reminds me of detective work. There is a lot of drudgery in investigating many possibilities before one finds a clue that might lead to a solution. Although the mystery may never be solved, the search provides the excitement of finding out about a new resource, finding an ally in an unexpected place, and seeing a way to put pieces together that will make possible the support of the teachers' center.

## Note

[1] The complete report from which this article is drawn, "The Teacher Center, Inc., New Haven: Is There Life After Seed Money?" by Harriet Bograd (New Haven: The Teacher Center, Inc., May 1976 [Part I], May 1978 [Part II]), is available for $2 from The Teacher Center, Inc., 425 College Street, New Haven, Connecticut 06511.

# FUNDING POSTSCRIPT 1: ADVICE FROM OTHER CENTERS

## *Workparty Participants*

Not only independent centers, but almost all teachers' centers experience scarcity of money and must discover a variety of avenues for survival. Although acceptance and support for the concept of the teachers' center seem to be developing in federal, state, and local education agencies, the struggle for money continues. It goes on because most school districts are strapped for money and cannot adequately support centers even when they value them, and because applying for money and cannot adequately support centers even when they value them, and because applying for federal grants is a long shot requiring substantial investment of time, skilled grantsmanship, adaptation of programs to fit federal guidelines, and evaluation procedures that may not mesh with a center's goals.

Even when a center wins a grant, however, it is not realistic to expect that its funding struggles are over; shrinking school district budgets make it difficult for center funding to be "picked up by the district" after the special project funds expire. Support from a philanthropic foundation tends to be freer of constraining guidelines than federal funding, but it seldom comes with no strings attached or with promise of continuing subsidy Thus, diversified endeavors are necessary to assure continuing financial support. Many strategies for such diversification have been exchanged by center staffs at Teachers' Centers Exchange Workparties. The following suggestions for strategies have been excerpted from the Proceedings of the June 1977 Workparty held in St. Louis.[1]

## Local Sources of Support

1. Inservice contracts with school districts.
2. Fees from budgets of individual schools for which the center provides in-classroom or in-school assistance, or workshops at the center.
3. Fees for holding university, college, or community college courses at the center, or for their students' use of the center.
4. Contributions from teachers' organizations.
5. Local foundations and businesses.
6. Contributions from Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Jaycees, and other service organizations.
7. Contributions and volunteers from Junior League and other social service groups.
8. PTA and school volunteers.
9. Senior citizen volunteers.
10. Adult education funds.
11. Contributions from early childhood education associations.
12. Payments by school districts for development of curriculum at the center by district teachers.
13. District assignment of part-time "early retirement" teachers to the center.
14. Payments by school districts for sabbatical leave for teachers to work on the center staff.

## Strategies to Build School District Support

Gather together a core group of teachers' center advocates within the district. Invite a few of them to join the center's advisory board and to take on public relations for the center within the district. Work with schools that are strong supporters of the center and encourage these advocates to take on some public relations responsibility.

Organize a meeting for administrators at which center staff and users can describe the center and its resources. Stress teacher ownership of the center, voluntary participation, and representation of administrators on the advisory board. Invite principals to hold a school staff meeting at the center early in the school year, so that all the teachers can familiarize themselves with the center's resources. Encourage administrators and parent groups to state their needs and concerns to the center, which can then address the needs through its program.

Try to convince the district or county schools; office to print and distribute (at their expense) the center's publicity materials, provided that center staff remains responsible for content and design.

Present the center, its staff, and its advisory board as a resource and a facilitator, rather than as a program that will troubleshoot for a school. The center can tune into a school's interests and needs and help teachers work in those areas; it can also make matches between schools and teachers with similar concerns.

## Strategies for Getting Local Foundation Grants

In recent years many foundations have decided that educational grants have little or no long-term influence on public education. Therefore, you need to describe the relevant problems in education (such as desegregation, minimum competency requirements, dissatisfaction among teachers, financial cuts, or lack of community trust and involvement) to the foundation along with your clear plan for working on these problems and a realistic assessment of what can be done to alleviate them. Work to have your center seen as a force for change. Plan from the beginning how you will operate after initial funding. Seed money provided by foundations may lend a sense of false security, postponing the need to broaden a center's financial base. Be pragmatic: "By the third year we plan to . . ."

Some foundations and large businesses follow specific policies and procedures when considering grant proposals and requests for support. Before contacting any organizations for help (financial or otherwise), find out about their procedures and adapt your own efforts to them. Try to find out what kinds of support the organizations have given in the past, and to which groups. Talk to other groups that have already received support from them and find out about these applicants' tactics, approaches, impressions, and reactions. Learn about a company's affirmative action policies, the extent of its involvement in education, and its education programs, if any, for employees. Think about ways in which your center could contribute to those programs. Give your reasons for applying to this particular organization instead of others.

Some strategies for attracting local foundation money: Get to know the persons responsible for allocating funds. Find out what they are looking for, or interested in, and why. Draft a succinct explanation of your program, relating it where possible to the foundation's concerns.

After a preliminary letter, try to set up a personal meeting between center staff and the staff of the foundation or business. Put together a comprehensive presentation. Include a slide show, scrapbooks, photo displays, or a videotape in your presentation. Try to find someone within the organization to help you with your presentation. Discuss your budget and tax-exempt status, as well as your programming. Be prepared to talk about the total teacher education program in the area and explain how the center fits into it. Convince your potential funders that teachers, not textbooks and equipment, make the difference in quality education.

Consider the political implications of your request. Unless the center serves and enlists the participation of the entire community (parents, neighborhood, churches, children, local organizations, businesses), local foundations may be reluctant to fund it. The key question to the foundation may be "Who is on the center's board?" Do board members have contacts with the business community to seek and get additional support? Foundations want to know that people with sound business sense and experience are involved in the center.

## Strategies for Approaching Local Businesses

You will have to justify to a business its contribution of money to the center in addition to the tax money it already pays for schools. Do not deprecate the local school system, but stress that you can strengthen the schools' ties to the community and respond to community needs. Tell business people about parent concerns expressed to you; give them school enrollment figures and figures on teachers' use of the center. If they visit the center, point out ways other businesses are contributing. You might have a brown bag lunch to acquaint business people with the center. Or take a slide show to their meetings. Sometimes businesses that begin as donors of scrounge materials develop into financial supporters after a period of sustained contact.

When asking for support, try to establish a two-way relationship: "This is what we want from you" (money, matching funds, backing, recycle materials, accounting help, influence with the school board, legal advice, business representation on the center's advisory board) and "This is what we can offer you" (a place to voice the company's educational concerns, a vehicle to provide service to the community, influence within the school system, direct access to teachers).

Approach these people as parents as well as business people. If the person you are talking with has children or grandchildren in school, know that school's situation and how the teachers' center can serve it. Point out that their employees' children will be affected by a teachers' center. Suggest center programs that your potential funders might like to participate in—for example, consumer education, economics, city-based curriculum, local history, conservation, recycle.

Invite the business community to workshops at the center. (Be sure some participants at these workshops are long-time center supporters who can describe center activities.) Encourage teachers and business people to discuss the schools and education; help them understand each other's perspectives.

Once people in outside organizations or businesses are involved in the center, continue to build your relationship. When their advice would be helpful, call them up and ask them for it. Keep them informed in more ways than simply including them on the mailing list. Involve them in the activities of the center: invite them to center parties; ask them to help with fund raising among other local foundations and businesses; tell them of your hopes; and keep them up-to-date with your progress. Write thank-you letters to people who help you.

Keep a list of your non-monetary needs. Often firms that cannot give you money will gladly donate scrounge materials, office equipment, and pick-up and delivery services, or help you influence other sources of support.[2]

## Notes

[1] "Proceedings of Workparty #2, St. Louis, June 1977" (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1977).

[2] For further advice about obtaining support, see "Commonality and Diversity in Four Teachers' Centers—Conversation at Chautauqua," Teachers' Centers Exchange Occasional Paper No. 3 (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, July 1978), particularly p. 14.

## References

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*Foundation Directory.* Published biannually by the Foundation Center, 888 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10019. $36; also available in many libraries.

*Foundation News.* Published bimonthly by the Council on Foundations, 888 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10019. $20 per year.

*Grantsmanship Center News.* Published bimonthly by the Grantsmanship Center, 1015 West Olympic Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90015. $15 per year.

*Grantsmanship Magazine.* Published by Taft Information Service, Taft Products, Inc., 1000 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington D.C. 20005. Gives detailed information on funds offered and the purposes for which they are offered.

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# FUNDING POSTSCRIPT 2

### *Ruth Nedelsky**

The thing that struck me is that money is tight everywhere and is likely to continue to be so for a long while. I don't think that people are turning their backs on education, but rather are bewildered as to why money hasn't been able to buy a solution to educational problems. I think they are saying, "I don't want to keep pouring money into the school when that doesn't seem to have helped."

Teachers, too, feel overwhelmed by criticism, by what seems a vote of no-confidence, by Board demands of accountability, and by the enormity of the problems that arise out of working with large concentrations of children of the poor in congested urban settings. The problems are growing, but the funds and the sympathy are diminishing. Hence, as I see it, teachers' centers are more crucial than ever. They point the way to the kind of educational practices that make success in the classroom possible, at the same time that they provide for professional development that works.

I was struck, too, by the fact that although almost every center had its tale of woe, the atmosphere was not one of despair, but rather that of rising to an exciting challenge. We know that what we offer to teachers and to children makes sense in the classroom. Part of our job now is to convince a larger audience—a larger part of the public—of the merit of what we are doing. To this end, some teachers' centers are getting more deeply involved in parent education and parent use of the center.

I also realized how very important volunteering of service will be in the coming years if we are to expand our services to teachers. That is, we need to find a network of people in each community who have special talents and who will be willing to lend them to the center for the excitement and satisfaction of having an impact on the education of and on practices in the classroom.

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*This commentary is an excerpt from a letter written by Ruth Nedelsky of the Teacher Curriculum Work Center, Chicago, as an afterthought on the June 1978 Urban Workparty sponsored by the Teachers' Centers Exchange, held in New York City.

## RUTH NEDELSKY

I suppose that, aside from the delight, pleasure, and stimulation of the meetings, the interesting people, and the fine classrooms we saw, my most lasting impression has been my understanding that fund raising is an integral part of running a teachers' center and that there is no way out of it — no matter where one looks, funds for education are being cut back. Fund raising does require rather different talents from running a first-rate teachers' center, but they are not at odds with operating a center, and they will help us in the teachers' centers movement to carry our work to nonbelievers and make them see the importance of what we do.

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO TSURUTA

# HOW TO WRITE AND PUBLISH YOUR OWN *DICK & JANE*

*Ron Jones*

I have a fantasy about textbook publishers that goes something like this.

**Bob:** (first vice-president in charge of innovational material and understudy to T.J.): *T.J. really likes our new series on inquiry!*

**Jim:** (second V.P. in charge of innovational material): *It was tight for awhile, I didn't think the old man would go for the changes.*

**Bob:** *No, he knows where it's at. Taking questions from the back of each chapter and placing them as the introduction to each chapter is a stroke of genius.*

**Jim:** *Yes, and the sales team will love that full-color "process page."*

**Bob:** *That page gives the book "open grade-level usage."*

**Jim:** *Do you think we should give teachers a couple of pages to describe how they might use this "new approach?"*

**Bob:** *T.J. wants to hold on that, but plans to use teacher comments in our promotional brochure.*

**Jim:** *I hope that doesn't alienate the state adoption boards and school purchasing agents.*

**Bob:** *Our sales survey indicates that school and state purchasing agents are beginning to ask teachers for some input. In fact, T.J. wants to invite several teachers to act as consultants for our next series.*

**Jim:** *That's great!*

**Bob:** *Yes, we plan a series that revises our* "Human Exploration into Human Sciences." *We are going to call it* "Biology."

**Jim:** *That's great! We can put the questions in the back of the chapter where they belong.*

Well, that's my fantasy about textbook publishing—the trouble is that this fantasy has a habit of coming true. Every year textbooks pop out of the publisher's oven with new covers and new titles, but the content is always the same. They define learning in terms of divisible subject areas in which things like math and English never meet. They structure learning into steps and reading levels that insist upon a domino theory of knowledge. They encourage verbal skills and deductive paths of logic, yet avoid the use of intuition and imagination, or contemplation and direct action, as problem-solving tools.

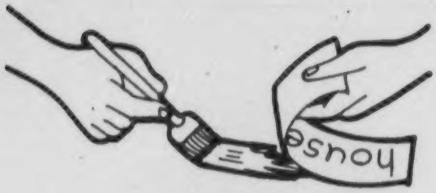
Although these textbooks purport to be universal guides to learning of great worth and importance, a single clue points in another direction. In the six years I taught in city and country schools, no one ever stole a textbook.

If textbooks don't respond to the questions you ask or the methods of learning you use, then it's up to you to commence writing your own histories, adventures, and inquiries into the world. Writing your own *Dick & Jane* can be a great deal of fun. It might even be informative.

The following is a true story about how a group of teachers, parents, kids, and friends wrote and distributed their own textbook. It all started about seven years ago in a San Francisco warehouse. Antioch College West had established an urban campus along with Interaction Associates in a warehouse on 9th Street. This common meeting ground allowed teachers and students from every grade level to meet and share ideas. During one meeting, it became apparent that there was need for a workbook or guide that would use the city as a classroom. This workbook would have to include many disciplines, appeal to any age, and stress various methods of problem solving as well as provide some answers. Such a text did not exist, so we decided to make one.

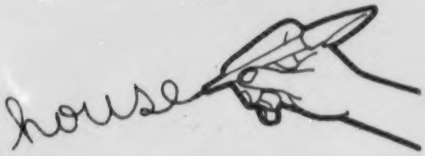
We started by making a list of ideas that such a text might include. Our list eventually covered eight lengthy sheets of butcher paper. Every idea submitted was accepted and printed on the list. Once the list was complete to everyone's satisfaction, we lumped together ideas that seemed alike or supportive of each other. For example, ideas on poll-taking in the city were put in one category, while ideas that used drawing or diagramming were placed in another category. As a result of this brainstorming and collecting process, we had the framework for our book—and more important, a title—*Your City Has Been Kidnapped*.

To test and extend our ideas we created 20 large posters. Each poster contained a specific theme for seeing and investigating the city. We took the posters to street corners, factories, and schools to encourage the passerby to comment on the ideas and add new ones. Within two months we had 43 posters, and more excitement than we could deal with. It was time to take one



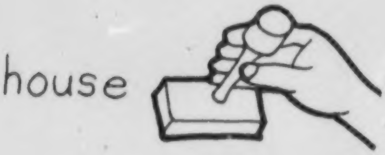
When we wanted to place words on the page we could type them out and paste them into place using rubber cement

or

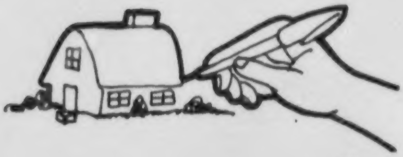


write them directly onto the page using a black ink dispersed by a handy felt-tipped pen or Rapidograph

or

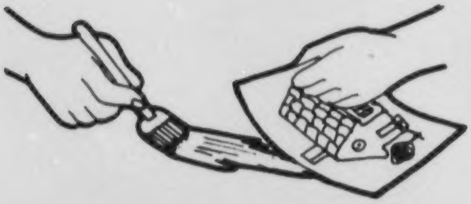


stamp them onto the page using a stencil or rubber stamp set.



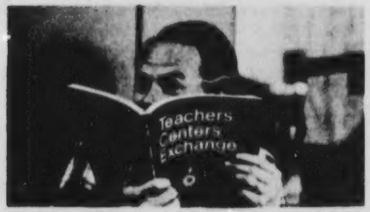
When we wanted to place an illustration on a page we would create our own line drawing using black ink

or



cut an illustration from a newspaper or magazine and paste it into place

or



"*. . . and Goosie Lucie said to Chicken Little . . .*"

have a photograph made into a screened half-tone print (reduced to a dot pattern) and then glue the print into position on the page.

giant step forward and translate our posters into book form.

Printing a book starts by determining what words and images will appear on what size and number of pages in what order. In our case, we wanted to maintain the poster format so we settled on a large 11" x 15" page size. Once we decided the page size, it was a simple matter of filling the page with the ideas and images we had collected.

By doing our own layout we experienced the enjoyment of translating ideas into visible forms. We learned to use rubber cement sparingly, keep a box of photographs and magazine illustrations, and use blue pencils to mark the boundaries of our pages for the printer. Most important of all, we learned that inexperienced individuals can design and prepare a book for printing.

Upon delivery of "camera ready copy" (our layout pages with all pictures, drawings, and words pasted in place), our printer invited us to watch the printing of our book. He made photographic plates from our copy, placed them on a web press, pushed a button, and asked us for $1400. Fourteen hundred dollars later we had 5000 newsprint copies of *Your City Has Been Kidnapped*. We had done it! Printed our own book! Now we had to sell some or move into a bigger house.

To our surprise the act of distributing our book became as exciting as its writing. Whereas textbook publishers rely on state adoptions, conventions, and a massive sales force, we decided to depend on our Volkswagen, postage stamps, and the classroom teacher.

Instead of filtering books down a funnel from the top, we planned to distribute our book from the bottom up. It was our hope that teachers would like our book, pass it around, and buy a copy. In June (quite late in the school year), we mailed out free to teachers 2000 copies of our city book. Our mailing list was a collection of friends, and local AFT, BARTOC,[1] and *Big Rock*[2] subscribers. We enclosed a letter saying who we were and what we were doing. Within four months we sold the remaining 3000 copies of our book and prepared to complete another printing. The greatest sense of accomplishment, however, appeared in the thousands of letters people sent encouraging and thanking us for our effort. One letter particularly sticks in my mind. A brief note from an elementary school teacher in Chicago thanked us for the book and in closing mentioned that she needed another copy. Her children and then a parent and even a fellow teacher kept trying to steal her copy! At last a book worth stealing.

## Part 2: The Son of *Dick & Jane*
## (Or How to Start Your Own Materials Exchange)

The mail just kept coming. Opening a daily tide of letters became an adventure in itself. Someone sent us a Wheaties box top and the local teachers' association enrolled us in their tire-buying club. Most of the letters were from parents, teachers, and kids describing how they used our book and what they thought about school. Sometimes we would get a delightful poem or love letter and always we would get encouragement. The letters came by the hundreds from every corner of the nation. Yes, there are good people in the biggest and smallest of places. And yes, they have ideas and experiences to share. We had sent our one hand-crafted textbook and received enough material in return to compose 20 more.

To continue this exchange of ideas we decided to assemble a scrapbook of learning. We hoped this scrapbook would be a convenient and inexpensive way for teachers to share their lesson plans with each other. It would be easy—we would assemble the various ideas sent to us into a scrapbook; have it printed on newsprint; and mail it to the contributors and others interested in its content. Like most scrapbooks it would contain memorabilia of classroom events, some photos of loved ones, and at least one vision of the future. It would be fun to look at and use. And like most scrapbooks, it would be for every age group. Most important of all, it would be incomplete—it could stretch in any direction and be used in a variety of ways.

Our first attempt at printing a scrapbook of learning was called *Deschool Primer Number Four*. As a compendium of ideas it contained lessons in fantasy, camouflage, matrix games, plans for milk carton boats, recipes, rules for a capitalistic lunch, and lots more. There were activities for theatre, photography, problem-solving, art, magic, numbers, and even reading. When completed, this *Primer* looked like a supplement from the Sunday paper. The cost for printing such a paper was extremely low. In fact, to print 10,000 copies cost less than $800.

It was our intention to mail several thousand copies of the *Primer* free to teachers and, we hoped, to sell the remainder to accrue enough money to print additional materials. To avoid the perils of becoming a big business, we formed a non-profit collaborative managed by a teacher-parent group called Zephyros.[3] What had started as teachers writing their own text had merged with a larger group of parents and teachers organized to support each other in the formation of a materials exchange, people's computer center, kids teaching kids project, and store for open classroom materials. As a part of this non-profit education group, the materials exchange decided to tithe a percentage of any revenue to support other projects by local teachers. The exchange also determined to stay small. By remaining small, we could enjoy and personalize our service, thereby avoiding the need for offices and purchase order mania. Most important of all, we wanted to demonstrate the feasibility of a small group of teachers actively exchanging and building their own learning tools.

On mailing our *Primer* we were stunned by the reaction. Throughout the country, ad hoc groups of teachers and parents began to send us texts that they had assembled. One book from a parent group in New York was in the form of a report card evaluating their school. From Teacher Works in Portland, we received a box full of learning ideas. Lollipop Power, a women's collective in North Carolina, sent us several books for pre-school children. The books that we received came in every size and format. They were about every conceivable topic. They often blended academic disciplines and were addressed to a variety of age groups. In viewing this collection of teacher/student/parent compositions, I have a new fantasy about textbooks. It goes something like this: There is a group of people—Dick, Jane, Mother, Father—and a dog, Spot. One day they come to life and decide to write their own guide to learning about the questions and needs they encounter in their local neighborhood. It's not a big book, and it's of little concern to schools of education, professional groups, or commercial publishers. But, it's an important book, because it is the responsibility and creation of the people who will use it.

## Notes

[1] Bay Area Radical Teachers Organizing Committee.(1972).

[2] *Big Rock Candy Mountain*, published by Portola Institute, Menlo Park, California.

[3] Zephyros Education Exchange, 1201 Stanyan Street, San Francisco, California 94117.

PHOTO BY RUTH KREITZMAN

# DEVELOPING ADMINISTRATORS' SUPPORT

*Patricia and Drea Zigarmi**

How can a teachers' center staff work more effectively with school district administrators to develop administrators' understanding of the center's purposes and goals, to respond to their criticisms and advice, and to gain their support? This article is based on a study we conducted of administrators' views about 12 teachers' centers in 11 communities. The study was designed to explore issues and strategies related to the development of administrative support for teachers' centers. While administrative support is not the only factor accounting for centers' success or failure, it is certainly one of the more important factors to consider in developing a teachers' center.

This article is divided into three parts. The first part discusses administrators' perceptions of the *purposes* of teachers' centers and is intended to answer two questions: (1) from an administrator's perspective, how do teachers' centers help meet the professional development needs of teachers, and (2), what do administrators value in teachers' centers? We feel that the words administrators use to frame the purposes they ascribe to centers may be helpful to new centers as they begin to articulate their purposes to teachers and administrators.

In the second part of the article, we describe administrators' concerns about teachers' centers. We wanted to learn about the problems administrators had encountered in working with teachers' centers so that new centers might be able to anticipate those problems in their development.

The third section of the article is a compilation of strategies that experienced centers have used to develop and maintain administrative support.

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*The research for this paper, conducted in the winter of 1978, was co-funded by the Ford Foundation and The National Institute of Education through the Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development.

## BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

We feel it is important for new and old centers to undertake strategies to inform and involve administrators in the development of the center's program.

### Methodology

In carrying out our research on administrators' attitudes toward teachers' centers, we interviewed 124 teachers' center staff members and administrators in 11 cities and 12 centers. At each site, we interviewed center staff members as a group and, if possible, at least one person in the central office administration of the district, two or three building principals, and one or two curriculum specialists. Center staffs were asked to suggest names of people in these positions to interview. In all, we interviewed 15 superintendents or associate/assistant superintendents, and ten central office staff people in positions like director of human resources, director of special programs, and director of federal programs. We also interviewed four directors of district-based staff development programs; six curriculum specialists; 32 principals; one board of education member, one administrative assistant to an area superintendent, a maintenance manager, and three higher education administrators. In all, 124 people were interviewed, including 73 administrators in these nine categories.

Sites were selected where teachers' centers had existed for from two to 15 years. All of the sites were centers that fit into the framework for describing teachers' centers outlined in the book, *Exploring Teachers' Centers,* by Kathleen Devaney and Lorraine Keeney. The centers are similar in the following ways:

1. They offer teachers fresh curriculum materials and/or ideas and emphasize active, exploratory, frequently individualized classroom work.
2. These programs engage teachers in making their own curriculum materials or involve them in some entirely new learning pursuit of their own in order to reacquaint them with the experience of being active, exploratory learners themselves.
3. Teachers' center instructors are themselves classroom teachers sharing their own practical, classroom-developed materials; or they are advisors who view their jobs as stimulating, supporting, and extending a teacher in his/her own directions of growth, not implementing a new instructional model or strategy.
4. Attendance is voluntary . . . programs are based on teachers' expressions of their own training needs.[1]

All of the sites where interviews were conducted were places where successful relationship with administrators had been established. They were all places where there was a history of increasing involvement with the district. Sites were also selected because they represented a cross section of administrative and financial arrangements between districts and centers. Independent centers as well as school-district and university-based centers were included; the sample also included urban, rural, and suburban centers. Finally, all of the sites were places where school administrators had played a variety of roles in the development of the center and, therefore, had first-hand knowledge and experience of the center's purposes and programs. The 12 centers were Mountain Towns' Teacher Center in Wilmington, Vermont; The Advisory Center and Teacher-Parent Center at Durham School, both in Philadelphia; Workshop Center for Open Education at City College, New York City; New Haven Teacher Center, New Haven, Connecticut; Teacher Center Brookline, Brookline, Massachusetts; Bay Shore Teacher Center, Bay Shore, New York; Teaching/Learning Center, Charlotte, North Carolina; Advisory Center for Teachers, Waxahachie, Texas; Open Space Environmental Teacher Center, Los Angeles; Teacher Shelter/Teachers' Active Learning Center, Oakland, California; and The Teachers' Workshop, Madison, Wisconsin.

## Purposes of Teachers' Centers: Administrators' Perspectives

To understand administrators' perspectives on how teachers' centers help meet the staff development needs of teachers, we asked administrators about the purposes and the services of the center they were most familiar with; about the effects the center had had on individual teachers, building staffs, and on the distrct as a whole; and about the relationship of the teachers' center to district priorities and to established processes for curriculum development, staff development, and teacher evaluation.

In open-ended interviews, administrators identified a number of purposes for teachers' centers. We grouped responses from administrators into 11 items across the whole sample. Quotations from administrators in the right-hand column are coupled with our observations in the left column to illustrate the categories of administrators' responses we identified. The most frequently ascribed purposes are described in the items at the beginning of the list; the least frequently mentioned purposes are at the end of the list.

## BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

*A teachers' center:*

1. Provides teachers with help in problem solving and encourages them to try new approaches to solving problems they are having in the classroom.

It's a place to get consultation and advice, guidance and suggestions.

The teacher center is a support system for the instructional staff; it allows staff members to raise concerns or come in with a particular problem and have someone listen to it and identify resources that can help.

It is a place for teachers to come together to share experiences. We hoped to create a climate for experimentation, innovation, and development.

When teachers run up against a problem they know there's a place to go and get it solved.

At the center there's not the feeling of frustration you get in a number of districts—there's an outlet, a place to go to explore problems.

2. Is a place for teachers to explore and develop materials to use in the classroom. It provides teachers and children access to equipment, tools, construction materials, recycled materials, and other resources.

It's a little bit like window shopping at the teacher center. You see things that perhaps never occurred to you as being of some use or value,

There are materials and ideas a teacher can brose through to see if something might help unlock what a student is having problems with.

The teacher center gives people who want open-ended materials and ideas access to and a continuous dialogue about those materials.

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| | The center helps teachers make homemade materials, which tend to be more effective because teachers have a definite need in mind when they make them.<br>With a lack of money in the district to purchase materials, it's amazing what materials the center provides free. |
| 3. Connects teachers with each other so they can share ideas and resources. | Through the teacher center, teachers learn to share materials like math manipulatives that are scarce in schools.<br>The teacher center breaks down competition among teachers and helps them learn to build on each other's ideas.<br>The activity teachers engage in at the center may not be as important as the exchange – the opportunity to appreciate each other's expertise.<br>The teacher center leads to valuable sharing across schools in the district.<br>The teacher center broke down subject matter boundaries between my teachers, and overall it improved the morale and cohesiveness of my faculty. |
| 4. Provides social-emotional support to the people who use it. | At the teacher center you can deal with everything that affects you as a person – personal as well as professional kinds of concerns.<br>The teacher center helps reduce the social isolation of the teacher. |

Literally, dozens and dozens of people will go to the center after hours with no more inducement than a cup of coffee, an opportunity to make things, and to talk with their colleagues.

I think we have probably retained individual teachers in the district because they felt that the center gave them support and allowed them to grow professionally. In the classroom, they've done very creative work because they've had that outside support.

The teacher center allows teachers who have been teaching 15 years to stay in teaching and to stay vital. At the teacher center you will see a teacher who's been at it for 15 years with the same energy as someone who's been teaching for three years.

The real purpose of the center is to provide social support to teachers who are taking some risks.

5. Organizes workshops and college courses for teachers.

I am aware of some very creative workshops the center organized in the area of language development.

The workshops at the teachers' center seem to be less formal, less directive, more intimate.

Administrators were aware of workshops that centers had organized at the center and in schools for teachers, parents, instructional aides, and substitute teachers. They were aware of workshops held in all curriculum areas after school and on weekends during the school year, and of workshops held during the summer; the most frequently mentioned areas were reading, child development, and the arts.

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| 6. Is a resource in staff development, curriculum development, and teacher evaluation to administrators at the building level. | The teacher center is an ally or resource to principals in providing curricular and instructional assitance to teachers.<br>When this school became an open space school, the center helped teachers who were making changes set up the organization, design their space, make learning games and furniture.<br>The teacher center is a resource to in-service planning efforts at this school.<br>Often I'll point out a workshop at the center that is on a topic a teacher's having problems with and encourage that teacher to go.<br>The teacher center can provide substitutes so that the teacher can spend two or three days at the center making materials and consulting with curriculum specialists.<br>If the teacher is open to the idea, the staff of the center are willing to come out to the school at my request to observe or work with teachers who are having problems. Often I'll arrange a three-way conference with a staff member from the teacher center, the teacher, and myself. |
| 7. Provides teachers with in-classroom advisory assistance. | The teacher center staff know how to guide, how to direct a teacher. They can help the teacher apply what he/she has learned at the center in the classroom. |

The staff will often work directly with children or with teachers in their classrooms, helping teachers set up their rooms, helping them with record-keeping, or helping them develop new curricula.

The consultants the center hires stay a week—offering sessions at the center in the evening. During the day they work with individual teachers in their classrooms.

8. Has responsibility for orienting new teachers and, in some cases, student teachers, substitutes, and para-professionals in the district.

The center holds open houses for new teachers to make them more aware of available resources.

The teacher center trains all of the instructional aides in this district. In some schools the center has helped the aide plan with the teacher he/she works with.

The teacher center trained all the substitutes in the district this year. Teachers worked with them at the center on discipline and management concerns.

9. Helps teachers reflect more on how children learn. The center helps teachers be more observant and reflective and develop deeper understandings of the teaching-learning process.

The teacher center helps teachers think about themselves, how they work with children, and what they do with curriculum.

The "children's thinking group" offers something to teachers who know how to do all sorts of things but who now want to know why they're doing it and what to do next.

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| | The teacher center gives teachers a place to think through their beliefs about education, kids, themselves, and to find some support to deal with the tremendous pressures they're under for accountability.<br>The teacher center gets teachers excited about learning. They, in turn, get students excited about learning. |
| 10. Encourages teachers to take more responsibility for their own staff development, to be more self-directed. | Involving teachers in planning, designing, and participating in their own staff development is what the teacher center does really well. For them, it's their mode; for curriculum specialists, it's an accommodation.<br>The teacher center provides teachers with time and space to identify their own needs and resources to fill those needs. The teacher center is the only program in the district that does that.<br>I think that teachers have an increased sense of their own power and energy as a result of participation in the teacher center—power not in terms of knocking people over the head, but power that comes from knowing I'm responsible for my own professional growth, that *I* can go and get help. |
| 11. Gives teachers experience in leading staff development programs. | The teacher center is a training ground for teacher leaders in staff development. A number of teachers will lead small workshops, get their feet on the ground, and feel more secure about branching out and offering their expertise to others. |

The teacher center encourages staff development leadership on the part of teachers; it develops their initiative, and recognizes teachers with special skills.

In summary, we were impressed by the broad range of purposes administrators ascribed to centers and the extent to which administrators' perceptions correlated with centers' definitions of their goals. Administrators who had had the firsthand experience with teachers' centers clearly understood the goals and programs of the centers they work with. The administrators we interviewed valued the resourcefulness and exchange of resources that centers provide. They valued the support centers provide teachers and administrators to plan programs and carry out changes in their schools and classrooms. They valued the services centers perform in training new teachers, instructional aides, and substitute teachers. One administrator told us that he valued the center because "It is a place where principals, supervisors, parents, and teachers can plan for instructional improvement in a collaborating environment." Other administrators valued teachers' centers for the same reason: they break down role barriers. In at least a few cases, administrators valued teachers' centers because they share the center's philosophy about teachers' professional development. One administrator said, "I feel staff development in a district should be just as individualized as we would like our classrooms to be. All teachers learn differently." Another administrator commented, "We ought to have as many organizational mechanisms in the school system as possible so that if a teacher wants to learn in another way, there's another way."

To the extent that administrators value what the center does, and see that its purposes match what the district thinks is important, the center can expect to develop administrators' support. To the extent that administrators value what the center does but see those purposes as peripheral, the support administrators give the center may be short-lived if choices about priorities have to be made.

It is also important to note that most of the administrators we interviewed had had a number of years of firsthand experience with teachers' centers, which may explain why their understandings matched the centers' intentions as well. It is unrealistic to expect that sort of match in administrators who are beginning to work with new centers. In order to develop support, new centers have to decide which aspects of their program to emphasize and which to minimize in their interactions with administrators; centers will also have to decide how they can best communicate what they are trying to do, in order to resolve some of the concerns administrators have as they begin to interact with centers.

## Administrators' Concerns about Teachers' Centers

During our interviews we asked administrators to talk about their reservations and concerns, and we asked them to describe the problems they had encountered in working with teachers' centers. Our descriptions of the reservations administrators expressed and the problems they identified are stated in the left-hand column in the section that follows; illustrative quotations are included in the right-hand column.

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| 1. Some administrators perceived that teachers' centers serve only a small number of motivated teachers who are sympathetic to the center's philosophy. They observed that teachers' centers don't do any better job attracting teachers who are unmotivated than district programs do. | If you go everyday, you begin to feel that the center's yours. The center may have attracted a group of teachers who have coalesced into a clique, and the center, as a result, may be sort of exclusive. |
| 2. Some administrators had concerns about the educational philosophy of the teachers' center. In districts where there were district-approved curricular materials and textbooks, there were a few questions as to whether the center's materials were "approved." | Some of the things the center encourages teachers to do may take time away from the regular curriculum.<br>Certainly the center does a better job with informal, open education teachers than with more formal traditional teachers; although alternatives are important, I'm not sure I want classrooms to be as "open" as the center wants them to be. |
| 3. Some administrators thought that teachers' centers may duplicate already existing services in curriculum and staff development; or, if they did not duplicate ser- | I don't know where the line will be, but I'm sure there's a line somewhere down the road where I'll start to become concerned about where the activities of the center begin to en- |

vices, at least there was a lack of coordination.

croach on my job. At this point, I see it as a supplemental service—as a legitimate alternative that doesn't threaten the inservice activities my office is likely to provide.

Not everyone perceived that teachers' centers were potentially in competition with district curriculum development specialists. Some administrators said teachers' centers and curriculum specialists have similar goals and can be supportive of each other. Some administrators saw teachers' centers as a natural way to extend the curriculum into classrooms: they perceived that centers help teachers set up an organizational structure which allows students to work on the curriculum. One administrator who commented on the relationship of the teachers' center to existing curriculum services said, "Curriculum development people focus on information-giving; they tend to be more materials-oriented and directive. In contrast, centers focus more on developing a teacher's resourcefulness with the curriculum. Teachers' centers are less formal, more intimate."

4. The most frequent reservation administrators expressed about teachers' centers was their fear that centers may not follow standard administrative procedures and therefore, cause administrators a number of problems.

The teacher center seems to want to work with us, and yet be free of us.

I don't think the center is accountable to anyone.

As long as it's a very low budget item, which it is right now and has a low profile, then nobody's going to be mad with what it does that's *out of line*.

Administrators' concerns in this area clustered around several topics: (1) safety and problems with the fire marshall; (2) noise; (3) unorthodox budgeting procedures because of the number of small transactions; and (4) lack of conformity with district policies and procedures in hiring staff, hiring consultants, arranging contracts, or following established channels of communication.

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| 5. Only three or four administrators expressed concern about decision making in teachers' centers, although one administrator felt that principals would need more input in decision making at the center if the center staff wanted to work with teachers in buildings. | I'm not sure how decisions are made. I guess the staff makes them or there may be a group of teachers who do.<br>The friction may be more over union control of teachers' centers than teacher control of teachers' centers. |
| 6. A very few administrators said that costs related to released time and utilities (to keep the center open at night and on weekends) were a problem. | It's been a problem sometimes keeping doors locked and cleaning up. It has required more work, but it's worth the time and effort. |
| 7. A number of administrators felt that the teachers' center may not be very accessible to teachers because of its geographic location. They were concerned with the distances teachers had to travel to use the services. | The center may need to be decentralized to be effective. I don't know how many of my teachers will drive an hour after school to use the center. |
| 8. Almost every administrator we interviewed perceived that teachers' centers do not reach or meet the needs of secondary teachers. | The teacher center doesn't provide the kinds of training—abstract, verbal, analytical training—that secondary teachers seem to like and profit from. |
| 9. A few principals and other administrators believe that teachers' centers do not understand how change occurs in schools and consequently that they do not provide enough support to administrators in the change process. | Teacher centers stress loyalty to teachers as if principals were less loyal to the teacher—as if principals were the enemy.<br>Most people in teacher centers don't understand the change process. To create a humane environment in a school, you can't leave out any significant group. For that reason, teacher centers must involve school administrators. Principals should be the target of teacher centers. Teacher |

centers should understand that the principal, more than the center staff, has a great deal to do with setting the educational philosophy and tone of the school.

In summary, we were struck with how few concerns administrators raised about teachers' centers. Many of them had to be probed at length to name even a single concern. It is important to note, however, that most of the administrators we talked to did not start out in opposition to centers. They were not hostile, and therefore the concerns they expressed did not reflect an adversary position toward the teachers' center. For the most part, administrators' concerns related to the centers' non-bureaucratic operating style, to its lack of accessibility to certain teachers or groups of teachers, and to a possible duplication of services.

Curiously, many of the concerns administrators expressed, they anticipated they would feel if somehow centers continued to take hold and grow. It seemed as if administrators' images of centers as non-bureaucratic, autonomous places led them to expect that they would have certain problems with centers in the future, should those centers have more funding. Furthermore, a few administrators who were familiar with the new federal legislation pertaining to teachers' centers expressed two reservations about the growth of centers under the new funding. In the first place, they objected to what they perceived to be a lack of administrative participation in and control of the governance procedures for new centers. Many felt that the governing boards of new teachers' centers would come into direct conflict with local boards of education. Secondly, because the legislation was sponsored by the teachers' organizations, some administrators felt that new centers had the potential for becoming sites for political action.

In any case, the concerns administrators expressed about teachers' centers may be less instructive to a new group trying to establish a center than a summary of the strategies experienced centers have used to gain and maintain administrative support. The purpose of the last section of this article is to describe those strategies.

### Strategies to Gain Administrative Support

Perhaps the first question teachers' centers need to resolve before they consider which strategies they want to adopt to gain administrators' support is "What do we want support for?" Is it support to the extent that the administration will not interfere in the center's program? Is it active support to the extent that administrators serve as advocates for the program and help the center secure continued funding? Or is support sought because the center staff is convinced that administrators play a key role in the change process in schools, and thus to insure the center's success in working with teachers, the center has to work with administrators. In some cases, centers may not want district administrators' support because, above all, the center staff values its autonomy and senses that the center can be more of an alternative to traditional district-based staff development programs if it maintains independence. Depending on how centers answer the question "What is their support for?" they will be likely to adopt different strategies to inform and involve administrators. In order to secure foundation or district funding for their programs, teachers' centers may need the active support of administrators. Similarly, in order to provide longterm support to teachers who are trying to implement changes in their classrooms, centers may need to influence administrators' beliefs about learning and about the kinds of support teachers need.

Before we describe some specific strategies teachers' centers have used go gain and maintain administrators' support, let us share some overall observations related to developing administrative support. In the first place, almost no administrator we talked to had ever visited another teachers' center in another city or another part of the country. Most of the administrators we interviewed had not read much about other teachers' centers. In fact, most of the administrators we interviewed had not carefully thought through their beliefs about staff development in general nor had they considered alternative means for providing inservice training to district staff members. Their attitudes toward teachers' centers and the support they expressed came from their personal experience with the center(s) in their district.

What stands out most in our interviews with administrators—what has led them to be supportive of teacher centers'—is the confidence they have in center staff members. They told us teachers' centers staff were competent, energetic, creative people. As one center staff member said, "We take ourselves very seriously. The teachers who come here work very hard. They are teachers who are very involved. Administrators know this and respect us."

Secondly, we found staff members in teachers' centers to be very sensitive to possible concerns administrators might have about the center. In their planning, they seemed to be able to anticipate and accommodate administrators' concerns. One teachers' center director said, "We look at what else is on administrators' schedules on a given day before we go to see them, so we can know if they are already feeling overburdened." Other center staff members told us they tried to keep administrators informed about their work with teachers in classrooms, often calling the administrator before going into a classroom and trying not to ask for released time for teachers when substitutes were in short supply. An administrator commented, "The teacher center evidenced a lot of sensitivity to not putting extra demands on me when they wanted to work in my building." When teachers' center staff members could show that they followed administrative procedures in the district—in personnel, in purchasing, and in having proposals and contracts approved—they were also more likely to win administrative support. As one teachers' center staff member put it, "A measure of our growth, of when we came of age, is that we learned to do things in duplicate and triplicate and to follow procedures."

Finally, an overall observation we can make about how experienced centers have gained the support of administrators is that they have thought about "who communicates with whom" and "how do they communicate?" To plead the center's case, they have consciously picked people who could influence the particular administrator whose approval they needed. With principals, centers have used teachers who have credibility and other administrators with firsthand experience with the center. With central office administrators or the board of education, centers have often used teachers and parents to present the center's case. In a number of districts, parent support is very important in convincing administrators about the worth of the center. In cases when administrators have to make a case for the center to other administrators, it is vital for center staff to find out in advance what information (and how much detail) the administrator(s) will need to defend the program convincingly in decision-making meetings.

In the paragraphs that follow the strategies experienced centers have used to inform, involve, and work with administrators as clients are described.

### *Informing Administrators About the Teachers' Center Program*

*Teachers' centers have:*

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| 1. Published newsletters, calendars, posters, and slide shows to describe their programs. | I've got the teachers' center calendar on the wall here. It's something I point out to visitors from other districts. |
| In some places, centers have asked administrators (principals, curriculum specialists) to describe their own staff development pro- | It's important that the schedules come out far enough in advance so that I can plan and teachers can plan if they want to attend. |

grams in the newsletter so that they get the extra publicity and recognition. Other centers have emphasized helping administrators see the benefits that will occur from teacher participation in the center and the center's participation in the school.

The center didn't seem to be an expression on teachers' part of dissatisfaction with what was offered, but a desire to provide some services we weren't capable of providing in a fashion that was a little less formal. It is important that the center not devalue what already exists.

Administrators did not seem to need hard data on the outcomes of a center's work with teachers or on the impact of the center's program in classrooms to be supportive. Our interviews seem to indicate that centers can focus on providing administrators with other kinds of information: numbers of people who use the center; the hours teachers spend at the center above and beyond the hours they attend on school or release time; how many teachers staff members in the center interact within a given period of time and around what sorts of requests; and information on the cost effectiveness of the center.

2. Used existing newsletters, attendance bulletins, and mailings to put out information about the center's program to administrators.

Often, we'll put announcements about activities at the center in the administrators' or PTA newsletter or in the newsletter that the daycare center sends out.

3. Displayed children's work and materials from the center in schools so that the center is visible to administrators in their own buildings.

One administrator pointed out boxes of math manipulatives and games on shelves in the library of his school. All of them had been duplicated from materials at the center. Another administrator proudly showed us student art work on the walls—something that had come from an advisor's work with students.

4. Invited administrators to open houses and parties at the center.

We make sure we invite administrators to any kind of informal parties, so we don't always see them when we're asking for something. We create opportunities for them to come and make their own observations and talk with teachers.

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| 5. Gone to administrators' meetings and made presentations and invited administrators to hold meetings at the teachers' center. | We try to meet with administrators over food—for breakfast or lunch.<br>We invite administrators to hold their regular meetings at the teachers' center and then as part of their agenda we give them a tour.<br>We let administrators know they're welcome to come by for coffee. |
| 6. Participated in administrative decision-making meetings. | We've asked to sit in on administrative council meetings so that we would know about curriculum and program decisions being made at that level.<br>One year we managed to turn up on the organizational chart and that gave us a lot of legitimacy. |
| 7. Used outside support or recognition to build administrative support. | We got the new mayor to hold one of his first press conferences at the teachers' center and all the newspaper people came and began to ask who we were.<br>We make sure administrators know when people come to visit our program.<br>We applied for "exemplary project status" from the state and got it—that brought in a lot of visitors.<br>We invite community groups like the Rotary or citizens' advisory committees to hold meetings at the center. Their minutes get written up and circulated to board of education members, who then come to see the center as tied into the community. We also let board members know when a business donates materials to the teachers' center. |

8. Made a special effort to communicate with new administrators in the district.

We send packets of background information about our program to new administrators. We make sure we include memos that show linkages between the center and the district and between the center and the community. We try to include letters of endorsement from central office administrators in the packets we send to new principals.

### *Involving Administrators in the Teachers' Center Program*

*Teachers' centers have:*

9. Involved administrators in planning and decision making; and asked administrators to serve on advisory boards for special projects the center gets funded.

We try to have frequent contact with administrators—at least to let them know what we're doing, at best to involve them in our planning—making them aware of what our intention is in advance so it doesn't hit them like a ton of bricks.

The teachers' center staff meets with principals before consultants are brought in, and together they identify teachers who might be interested in having a consultant visit their classrooms.

10. Found allies in the system who can help the center survive: the federal programs office, the print shop, and evaluation specialists.

We made friends with the business manager right away.

Get to know people in administration. Know where the pressure points are. Set up an informal network and talk about what you're doing even when it's not a crisis.

Find administrators who can advise you on strategies to gain support in the district and avoid resistance. Find advisors on protocol who can help you deal with administrative procedures.

11. Written acknowledgements for help administrators have provided.

As one administrator said, "They are always appreciative. They never take what I do for granted."

12. Gotten administrators out to other centers and into situations where they have to describe the teachers' center program to others.

We invite administrators to go with us when we are asked to make a presentation on our program at a conference. That way, administrators get into situations where they see other administrators and school districts struggling to get what we've already got, and hence realize the value of the center we've already started.

13. Tied the teachers' center program into existing services.

We've helped the curriculum specialists relate to what we do at the teachers' center by asking them to develop curriculum displays or learning centers for the center.

We feature announcements of curriculum specialists' workshops, and then we report on what happened at the workshop in the next issue.

14. Made a case for how the center can contribute to district goals and priorities and serve as a resource to principals and curriculum coordinators.

We try to anticipate outside demands on the district and then plan a series of workshops or find someone who is a specialist to spend some time in residence at the center.

We sponsored a conference on literacy this fall which focused the whole district and the community on an important topic for this district.

We go to administrators and ask them what they see as needs and then we try to be really clear about what the center can do to help in those areas. The center needs to show in fact that it can support, augment, complement, and cooperate with curriculum directors and principals.

Before school let out, we pulled all the reading specialists in the district together and developed samples of reading skill boxes. Over the summer we invited groups of parents and teachers down to the center to copy materials. The staff helped teachers think more about how they would use the materials in their classrooms.

We coded all the workshops and services of the center to the district's official statements of its goals and priorities and then included that information in our report to the board of education.

## *Working with Administrators as Clients*

*Teachers' centers have:*

15. Had administrators do workshops at the teachers' center.

Sometimes we get so used to seeing the administrator as an adversary, we forget she/he is also a teacher with interests and skills to share.

16. Let administrators know of staff development opportunities they might be interested in.

We try to write a personal note to administrators to let them know of staff development opportunities/conferences they might be interested in.

We've put administrators in touch with each other for problem sharing and solving and for professional growth.

While we had money, we arranged for the administrators we work with to visit schools and centers in other parts of the country.

17. Encouraged administrators to become involved in the center as a participant.

Our overall objective in arranging staff development opportunities for administrators was to help them see that teacher development takes time.

We invite administrators to visit with visitors who are touring the center and we invite administrators to hear outside speakers who are working with our advisors.

We sponsor principals' luncheons where principals report to each other on a conference they've attended or an article they've read.

To further the role of the principal as educational leader, we invite principals to join teachers in workshops so they can understand and support what a teacher is struggling to do in the classroom.

As part of our efforts to get administrators to use the center for their own professional development, we sponsored a conference on the principal's role in affecting the quality of life in the school.

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| 18. Helped administrators get into classrooms so they can feel good about what is going on. | Often when I run into the principal in the hall I'll suggest he go down to Mrs. Smith's room because the students there are really involved in an interesting project. Administrators rarely see those kinds of situations.<br>We run children's workshops and invite administrators. When we're planning our educational fair, we call administrators to have them suggest names of teachers who have expertise or ideas they might share with other teachers. |
| 19. Shown administrators how the center can be supportive of them in their roles as instructional leaders and help them be more effective in those roles. | You need to let the principal know how the center can help with her job and how it can help teachers be more effective in the classroom.<br>We help administrators think about how they can support teachers who are changing—by making special arrangements for storage, for planning periods, or for the use of special teachers.<br>I guess I'd characterize one of the roles I play when I'm in schools as "serving as an advisor to principals." Administration is really a lonely job, and advisors from the teachers' center could spend their whole day in the school providing support to administrators.<br>We organize workshops for administrators on curriculum, providing them with background information on techniques teachers can use for improving student achievement. If principals can feel |

like instructional leaders themselves they are more likely to support the teachers' center and not feel threatened by it.

People setting up a center need to think about not competing with the principal, because it must be difficult for the principal to watch staff members from the center always being able to pull back and leave the initiative with the teacher, when the principal can't always do that.

We offer to work with groups that get lost in the shuffle; for example, substitute teachers and playground supervisors. That makes the administrator's job easier.

In the preceding section we have described an eclectic group of strategies that teachers' centers have used to develop and maintain administrators' support. One set of strategies is aimed at informing administrators about the center's program. Another group of strategies is designed to involve administrators in planning and decision making in relation to the center's work with teachers. The third is a set of strategies for the center to use in working with administrators as clients, much in the same way the center works with teachers. In using any of these strategies, it is important that the center communicate regularly with administrators, not just when there is a crisis. As one administrator said, "Administrators need a backlog of experiences with the center when the time comes to make a decision on continuing the program or on funding." Teachers' centers that simply send administrators periodic newsletters or occasionally invite administrators to visit may be routinely supported by administrators, but they are likely to be seen as peripheral to the district's priorities for funding or for school improvement.

When centers involve administrators in planning and decision making in relation to the center's program, administrative support increases. For example, it is often possible for administrators who are involved in decision making at the center to suggest ways to reduce costs, since they know how to connect the center to resources in the district for printing, evaluation, and grant writing. By involving administrators in decision making, it is also possible to deal more directly with their doubts about the center's accessibility, involvement with secondary teachers, and possible duplication of services. When administrators are involved in planning, the center can probably more easily come to an agreement with the administration as to how the center can effectively support existing curriculum and staff development programs in the district.

The one teachers' center we visited that involved administrators as learners seemed to us to enjoy the most support. Administrators' active involvement in the center helps them advise and support teachers who use the center's services, and thus they increase the impact the center has on teachers' work in the classroom. As one administrator said, "I can go to the teacher center and learn what a teacher is learning. The experience helps me be more aware of the problems the teacher is going to have with students in that activity."

At another level, administrators' active involvement helps them understand some of the less visible, more implicit purposes of teachers' centers: for example, helping participants reflect more deeply on how children learn or helping teachers acquire additional skills in curriculum development. With firsthand experience as participants and use of the center for their own professional development, administrators may become not just supporters but advocates for the teachers' center. Through participation, they realize how the center can contribute to the district's goals and priorities, how it can contribute to teachers' effectiveness in the classroom, and what it can do to help them be more effective as administrators and facilitators of change.

## Collaborating with Administrators in School Renewal

With the new visibility of teachers' centers, owing to federal support for many new centers, even those centers which do not receive federal dollars may be judged, at least in part, on criteria of how they contribute to improvement in classroom instruction, curriculum development, and staff development, and not simply on the basis of how much they satisfy individual teachers. Where this becomes the case, it will be urgent for the teachers' center to have gained administrators' involvement and support.

The need for administrative support for projects that are concerned with renewal in schools is well documented (Scheinfeld et al., 1978; Zaltman et al., 1977; Berman et al., 1975, 1977, and 1978; Lieberman, 1973.) The research of Daniel Scheinfeld and his colleagues as they attempted staff renewal in two elementary schools in Chicago identifies several conditions that are necessary for initiating and sustaining educational renewal:

1. A supportive organization climate, as reflected in the general quality of working relationships among teachers, and between the principal and teachers, and in the pattern of norms regarding decision making in the school.
2. A supportive principal who becomes actively involved in the change effort.
3. Active support from the district's central office.

Our interviews with teachers' center staffs and with administrators indicated that up until now most centers have not paid much attention to these three conditions (with the exception of centers that have well-developed advisory or outreach components). Most centers have focused on their work with individual teachers; few have focused on work with whole school staffs or on systemic change (condition 1). Although centers may help teachers anticipate management and organizational problems that they might encounter in implementing changes in their individual clasrooms, and often will even help them anticipate student reactions to the changes, few centers help teachers anticipate and deal with resistance to change or find support from colleagues, parents, and administrators in their school settings.

Our interviews also reveal that few teachers' centers have identified administrators as clients; in turn, administrators acknowledge that they rarely participate in seminars or workshops at centers, either with their colleagues or with teachers. There are few opportunities for administrators to learn about what the center is doing with individual teachers who participate in the center's program; fewer opportunities for the administrator to learn how to support changes the teacher is making back in the school. In short, administrators are not actively involved in the changes or renewal teachers' centers are promoting (condition 2).

Finally, our interviews with administrators reveal that central office administrators, principals, and curriculum specialists rarely see teachers' centers as important vehicles for addressing or implementing district goals and priorities, even though the work of the center may be substantively and significantly related to those goals and priorities, (particularly in the areas of reading and language development, children's writing, mathematics, and classroom management). One administrator commented in an interview: "I would say either through force of habit or through lack of awareness of the potential of the teacher center that the average principal would look for another resource besides the teacher center if a needs assessment revealed a need that the faculty as a whole had to work on." Our survey suggests that centers in the years ahead need to be more articulate and persistent in showing how the center's program does now or can in future support, extend, or complement existing curriculum and staff development services related to district priorities, by reaching new groups of teachers or providing follow-up support and reinforcement to existing services to teachers. In some communities, centers may need to adopt new programmatic strategies related to district goals and priorities if their programs are to survive.

In summary, both the effectiveness and survival of a teachers' center will depend on administrators' support of the center as an alternative to other staff development opportunities in the district for a significant number of teachers, and on the extent to which administrators see the center as an effective way of helping teachers address district priorities. Because staff development is now in the spotlight as the main remaining hope for improving schools, we believe that both new and long-established teachers' centers must convince administrators that a center can produce more than peripheral impact on classrooms. We found that experienced centers which have been successful in gaining administrative support have been good at anticipating administrators' concerns and answering their questions about the center's program, philosophy, and operating procedures.

As new centers develop, we believe they will need to go further and ferret out the real basis for administrators' reservations. Perhaps administrators (like some of those we interviewed) are familiar with the program and purposes of the teachers' center but still don't define what the center does as staff development. This may be because staff development means to them a whole faculty or district-mandated effort rather than what an individual teacher does for individual professional improvement. Perhaps the administrator has a different philosophy of staff development or misunderstands the goals and purposes of the center. Maybe the administrator objects to teachers' involvement in decision making or has concerns about the kinds of curriculum that might be developed in a center. A center must respond to these differences in ways that resolve administrators' uncertainties and build support without compromising the center's essential purposes. Centers need to talk more about the *unique* form of staff development they can accomplish by helping individual teachers and groups of teachers create materials, share resources, develop an attitude of professionalism, and solve instructional problems. Centers also need to get administrators to value teachers' self-motivated learning for what it can contribute to the accomplishment of the district's goals and objectives and to teachers' increased sense of competency/efficacy in the classroom. By expanding the list of strategies presented here, which experienced centers have used to develop and maintain administrative support, we hope that new and old centers will be able at least to communicate and at best to collaborate more effectively with administrators.

## BUILDING A TEACHERS' CENTER

### Note

[1] Paraphrased from Kathleen Devaney and Lorraine Thorn, *Exploring Teachers' Centers* (San Francisco: Teachers' Centers Exchange, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1975), pp. 3-4. ERIC ED 107 601.

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# POSTSCRIPT: TEACHERS' VOLUNTARISM

## *Celia Houghton and Lorraine Keeney**

**Celia Houghton:**

Is teachers' voluntarism important – the choice whether to use the center or not? I believe that it is vitally important and must be preserved. This will become difficult as we move into the new era of federally supported centers.

The Office of Education funding, the national interest in teacher-centering as *one* way of helping teachers grow professionally, came about because of the clear success of teachers' centers that were started and operated in most cases by teachers and in all cases were used by teachers who chose to use them.

There had always been inservice programs and "superintendent's days." What was offered in these programs was not always or even usually bad. A workshop offered by the administration could be and often was every bit as good as a workshop offered by a teachers' center. So what was the big difference? What was the reason for the success of the teachers' center program that inservice programs did not have?

The main reason was that it was the teacher's own decision to use the center, and in almost all cases teachers got what they asked for at the center. "Needs assessments" were of the common-sense nature of questions direct to the teachers: "What do you want us to offer? What would be helpful to you?" Also, *all* teachers using the center were contributors as well as consumers –

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*These comments are excerpted from writings by Celia Houghton of Goddard College Teachers' Center, Plainfield, Vermont, and Lorraine Keeney of the Teachers' Centers Exchange, Washington, D.C., as afterthoughts on the July 1978 Rural Workparty sponsored by the Exchange, held in Wilmington, Vermont.

sharing of strengths and ideas was of the essence. Sharing of problems and seeking solutions was a major part of the work, and this could happen because the center was "neutral ground"—outside of "the system." Teachers had a real stake in the teachers' center; in most cases there was very little money so teachers volunteered time and often materials; and it was their center.

These teachers' centers could, however, have done more with more money. There is that opportunity now for some, with O.E. funding, but we could throw out the delicate baby of teacher ownership, teacher decisions regarding the teachers' center, with the bath water of the financial struggles and the hassles. We must be careful not to throw out the teachers' center's essence: choice.

**Lorraine Keeney:**

The issue of voluntarism and the relationship of the center to administration is indeed thorny. Centers that do not receive school district or federal financial support are having a very difficult struggle. At the same time, administrators are perceiving the value of centers and are making overtures to come together with teachers to start centers. What kinds of compromises may this lead to? What is the important essence of the center that must be preserved? I think that both teachers and administrators are attracted to centers because of the way in which the staff works with teachers: because of the concrete experiences, the personalized, developmental approach, because there is an opportunity for continuity of study. Voluntarism is one important element. Does melding the center style and objectives with administration's desires necessarily mean that a center loses its essence? Can't the staff be very clear about the center being nonevaluative and neutral from the administration, valuing teachers' strengths rather than exposing their deficits? If an administrator values the work of the center, can the staff and the teachers rightly turn their backs? Can't the center, through careful planning of a "superintendent's day," give teachers options, including the option of *not* going to the center but working in their classrooms on children's records or new curriculum material displays or rearrangement of the learning spaces? The center's image and public relations are of course very important. Some teachers may indeed be very suspicious of administration's input; others will gain enthusiasm from knowing that the school district supports their efforts to become more competent teachers. I do think that we need to be careful that the same old inservice structure does not become known as a teachers' center.

But I think we have an obligation to influence the type of staff development the administration offers and to encourage cooperation among all elements of the educational community.

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO TSURUTA

# ADMINISTRATIVE BACKING FOR A TEACHERS' CENTER: THE LAS CRUCES EXAMPLE

*Sharon Meier, Barbara Hall, and Robert Mai*

The Teachers' Center of Las Cruces, New Mexico, is a district-sponsored center that began in 1977. In this article, Sharon Meier describes the establishment of the Center and its first year of operation from her vantage point as director. Her narrative is prefaced and interspersed with commentary by Robert Mai, former director of the Educational Confederation in St. Louis, who visited the Center in April 1978 to consult with its policy board on organizational development. Barbara Hall, chairperson of the board's executive committee, also contributed to the writing of this article.

**Robert Mai:**

Las Cruces has some familiar ingredients of a good teachers' center: a charismatic, energetic, highly visible director; a pleasant, comfortable, down-home ambiance; imaginative workshops, working space, and curriculum materials that attract teachers. What Las Cruces also has which to my mind warrants widespread attention, is a functioning, task-oriented teachers' policy board, and a mandate from the district suerintendent to operate in the service of teachers.

The superintendent has said that he supports the Teachers' Center because it provides a vehicle for teachers to take responsibility for their own professional growth, and because he believes professional growth is the key to improving schools. In order to transform his favorable disposition into a working center, a small group of determined teachers had to demonstrate that the center concept was compelling to a substantial number of district teachers. Then they had to develop teacher leadership whose experience, judgment, and educational goals were trusted by the administration.

**Sharon Meier:**

Located in southwestern New Mexico, Las Cruces is a city of between fifty and sixty thousand people. There's an abundance of small to large farms in the area that grow cotton, pecans, chili, and lettuce. New Mexico State University is one of the main employers in the city, and L'Eggs Products (women's hosiery) is the only industry in the immediate area. Nearby is the White Sands Missile Range, a United States government test facility that brings "federal impact" money into the school district. Bilingual programs (more than fifty percent of Las Cruces citizens speak both English and Spanish), Head Start programs, and migrant programs also contribute federal funds to the district.

The Las Cruces School District has 17 elementary schools, grades K-6; four junior high schools, grades 7-9; two high schools, and two alternative high school programs. The school population is approximately 15,000 with 885 teachers and several hundred support staff.

### *Gaining Support*

In February 1977, a small group of teachers approached superintendent John E. Stablein with the idea of establishing a teachers' center within the Las Cruces School District. Several of us had visited or read about centers elsewhere, and were dedicated to realizing the concept which teachers have expressed throughout the country: that teachers need a place to work, to share, to grow professionally, and to find more ways to help children. Stablein was receptive and encouraged the group to "feel the pulse" of other people in the district.

After considerable phone calling and "buttonholing" of colleagues, we held a meeting of teachers, administrators, university professors, parents, and merchants to discuss a center. The enthusiasm of the more than 200 attendees proved that there was overwhelming interest in creating a center.

**Robert Mai:**

With this strong show of support by the teachers, the superintendent decided to act on what he knew made good sense as a staff development strategy. Acknowledging that professional growth and staff development were the key to educational improvement in the district, he recognized as well that commitment would likely be stronger and participation tied more to real needs if teachers were willing to take major responsibility for organizing their own staff development program. Accordingly, he pledged his support in the form of $15,000, a building, one full-time professional staff person, and two full-time aides.

Since a district curriculum office with a staff of coordinators for instruction and curriculum already existed, the superintendent's action was even more notable. It was an act of trust in teachers to carry out, on their own initiative, a project that could have a healthy effect on staff morale and the quality of instruction in Las Cruces schools. The superintendent insisted upon teacher governance and autonomy from the curriculum office as the most consistent organizational structure for this grassroots venture. The Center accounts directly to him for how it spends its budget, and for what results it produces.

**Sharon Meier:**

A small, influential group of teachers volunteered their services to begin organizing the teachers' center. Those teachers comprised what was to become the executive committee of the policy board. After writing a job description for a coordinator position, the executive committee, working with the personnel director, interviewed and made final recommendations for hiring the Center coordinator. Soon a more representative committee was selected to help administer Center policy and programs. Currently, each elementary school has a representative on the committee.

By fall 1977 an old laundry building rented by the school district had been renovated. We scrounged every bit of equipment for the Center, except the laminator and the overhead projector, from around the district. Everyone who could hammer, saw, or wield a paintbrush was involved—including principals, high school students, teachers, and spouses. More than 400 volunteer hours resulted in a warm and colorful place brimming with ideas and materials.

### *Starting Out*

A week-long open house launched the Teachers' Center's first year. Invitations in the form of "birth announcements" were sent to anyone who might be interested, including teaching staff, administrators, university personnel, and community persons. Visitors autographed our graffiti wall with comments like "Fantabulous place," "I feel at home," and "Praise the Lord."

In subsequent months, colorful brochures offering an array of workshops were sent to all elementary teachers. Topics included metrics, human sexuality, arts and crafts, reading, music, sexism in education, individualized instruction, and science.

We pride ourselves on the flexibility of the Center's scheduling. There have been many changes as we search for a successful combination to meet the needs of the majority of users. Currently we are open from 9 to 6 o'clock each weekday, but realizing that it is difficult for regular classroom teachers to do much besides teach during those hours, we are also open on Saturdays and any evening by request. The Center is fully staffed only during regular working hours, but an aide or the coordinator can be found there during extra hours and are available for consultation. Occasionally a member of the policy board will work as staff in order to keep the Center open a few extra hours. In addition to classroom teachers, university students, student teachers, and community people may also use the Center when it doesn't conflict with scheduled activities.

The Teachers' Center is not only a storehouse, but also sells materials at a nominal cost. A system has been developed through the superintendent's office whereby individual schools may reimburse teachers for the materials they purchase for classroom use. Teachers themselves still pay for many items out of their own pockets. A library of more than 200 titles and periodicals, many of them offering how-to's in the areas of individualized instruction, special education, open classroom techniques, and gaming, is also available in the Center.

The first phase of the Center was to offer teachers a chance to make their own materials. But there is a lot more the Teachers' Center can provide, and we are now getting requests for assistance in greater depth. For instance, a teacher will say, "Finally, I'm really getting some individualization in my classroom and I need some help. Could you come to my room to observe and suggest what I should do next?"

### *Working Together*

From the beginning, workshop sessions have been conducted by district teachers, administrators, Center staff, community members, and state resource people. Besides teachers, participants have included instructional aides, principals and other administrators, school board members, and parents. All of the district's special project curriculum coordinators were encouraged to use the Teachers' Center for their inservice workshops as a way of introducing the Center to teachers. Now the coordinators frequently ask to use the Center for their training.

New Mexico requires state recertification at intervals during a teacher's career. Heretofore, recertification credit was available only through the state universities, but the Teachers' Center is now able to offer many of its workshops for recertification credit.

In our second semester, we also offered graduate courses conducted by New Mexico State University faculty in diagnostic/prescriptive reading, and mainstreaming the special education student. Our plans for 1978-79 include a number of workshops carrying recertification as well as university credit.

Teachers will also be able to use Teachers' Center credits when they apply for salary increments. A system for selecting appropriate courses to carry salary and recertification credit was developed jointly by the Teachers' Center board, the superintendent, and the personnel office.

Undergirding all our efforts have been the unfailing support and unflagging energy of the policy board. Countless hours have produced decisions ranging from selection of staff, to projection of program, to policy matters like scheduling and credit. It hasn't been a bed of roses. But tensions, disagreements, and even tears have been compensated for by the rewards of forming a solid working corps and accomplishing our goals.

The policy board is the Center's greatest strength. If a center is to embody the axiom "for teachers and by teachers" the board must be an action board, not a yes-saying board. Whether and how the board develops into independence and genuine authority is a primary responsibility of the Center director.

The strength of our policy board is a major reason that the administration and school board are willing to take a backseat to teachers on professional development specifics. The school board's attitude on instructional matters—"Let's go ask the teachers"—is evidence of our good relationship. For example, on the issues of whether to apply with two other districts for an Office of Education teacher center grant and whether to expand the Center's services to secondary level teachers, the superintendent and the policy board jointly sent a questionnaire to all instructional staff in the district. The advice came back "no" on the OE grant and "yes" on the expansion to secondary. The policy board has followed that advice.

Making all this happen has drained Center staff and board, and we realize we need to streamline some of our governance and organizational procedures. We also need more staff. The board's plans for the coming year include addressing two major concerns: reaching and serving people who have not yet visited the Center, and developing further ways (beyond head-counts) to evaluate the effectiveness of the Center. More than twice the initial budget has been appropriated from local operational funds to operate the Center in 1978-79. Main program emphases will include secondary teachers' inservice needs and more extended professional development activities. We also have expanded our space, trading our laundry building for some remodeled space in a school.

The Teachers' Center that was the vision of a few dedicated Las Cruces teachers is now a reality for all of them. Our significance is not only the services we provide but also the evidence of a school district that has enough faith in its teachers to help them establish, maintain, and govern their own teachers' center.

**Robert Mai:**

The Las Cruces Teachers' Center testifies that a public school system not particularly unusual in its demographics, problems, and bureaucratic structure can stand firmly behind professional growth as a district investment, and behind teachers' management of that investment. Something is happening in Las Cruces that I think will grow stronger and more thoughtful in the next few years—something that can confront the timid, the skeptical, and the jaded with evidence that a teacher-run teachers' center can work without breaking the bank, and without rendering dysfunctional the conventional authority structure in the school system.

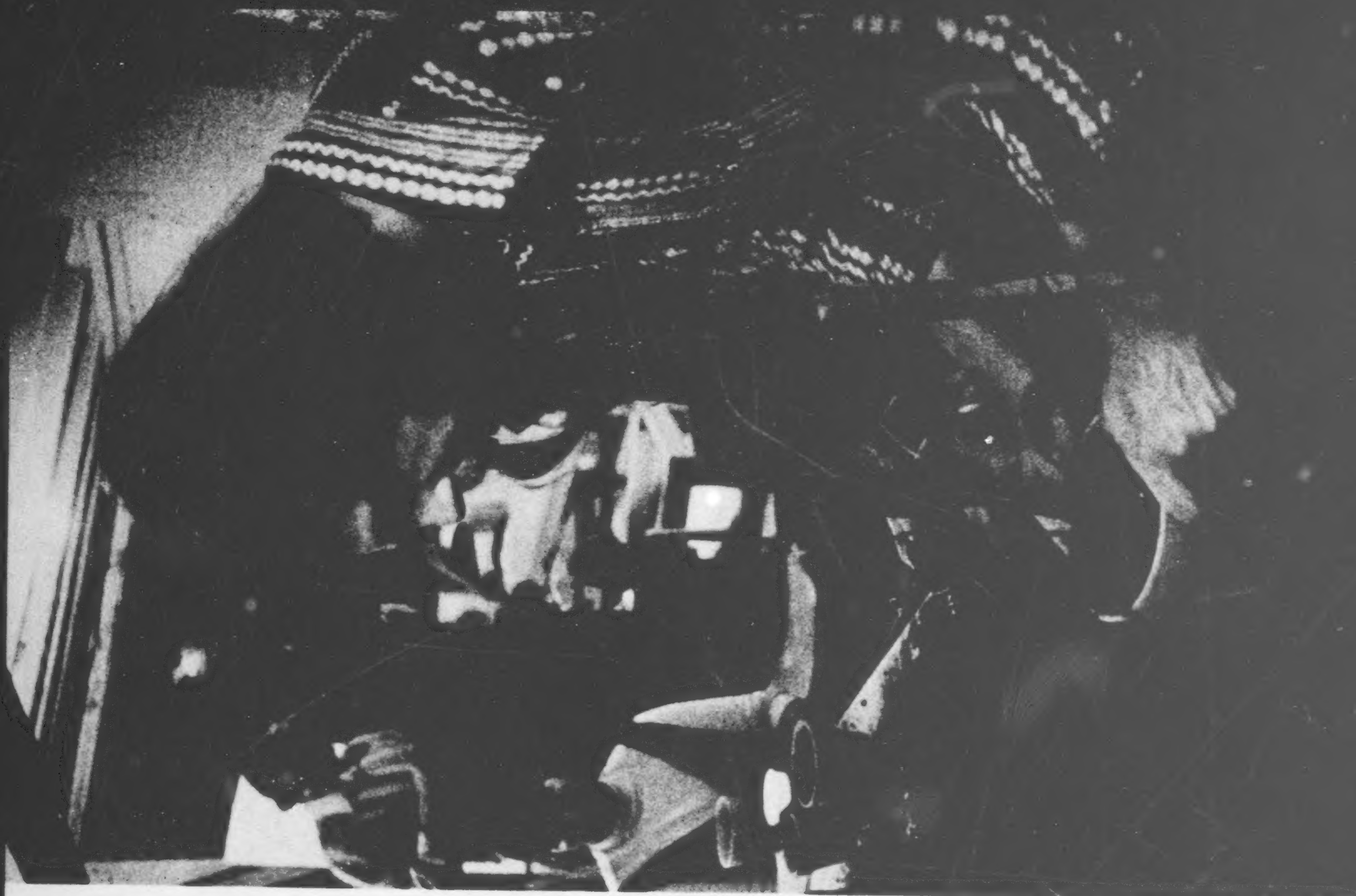

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO TSURUTA

# NOT JUST FOR PEOPLE IN SCHOOL

*Marianne Schenker*

The goal of the Education Resource Center on Chicago's Northside is to facilitate children's learning by making the process more meaningful for those who teach as well as for those who learn. We explicitly recognize parents and other community members, alongside certified classroom teachers, as "those who teach," because we believe that learning does not happen in the classroom alone, or just between the hours of nine and three. All the people who influence children's learning can benefit from sharing ideas, from recognizing their own special worth as contributors to the learning process, and from having access to inexpensive materials and ideas about how to use them in education.

When the Center offers a program of workshops, we frequently ask community people to lead them. When a teacher asks for classroom help or guidance, a parent, senior citizen, or college student may be the one to provide it. If a teacher wants to personalize instruction in a classroom of children from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds, he or she can find opportunities at the Center to taste the cuisine, hear the music and language, and see and feel the handiwork, crafts, and clothing of those cultures. We offer a place for parents to teach teachers, a place where everyone comes on equal footing.

By deliberately not calling our place a teachers' center, and by having a board of directors that represents community organizations and the community at large as well as teachers and administrators from several school systems, we make it clear that a teaching certificate is not the only mark of a

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person with something to teach. By sponsoring workshops at which adults who don't know one another can come together and learn something new, we also make the statement that we are all learners. Children are not the only ones who may feel overwhelmed or shy or defeated when faced with a new task—have you ever played autoharp, or made a shelving unit out of triwall cardboard, or fashioned bookends out of plexiglass? The Center has been described as a giant open classroom for grownups with an atmosphere of warmth, choice, and acceptance, materials to work with, and a staff who will offer direction, advice and encouragement.

## Teachers and Parents Together

Incorporated in May 1975, Education Resource Center is an independent, not-for-profit corporation serving the Northside community as a whole. We welcome teachers from all school systems, parents, artists, and anyone interested in the teaching/learning experience. ERC is not just a teachers' center; it is explicitly a community resource, started by members of the community which it now serves.

The community is one of the most varied and most vital in the city of Chicago. It stretches from the Gold Coast near Lake Michigan to the mixed-income neighborhood served by the Jane Addams' Center. With buildings ranging from elegant high-rises to hundred-year-old frame houses, the area ranks among the most densely populated in the world. There is a profusion of choices among life styles and among schools. It is an active community, consciously engaged in the discussion and process of enhancing city life for everyone. A great part of the discussion revolves around schools—preschools, after-school programs, parochial, alternative, and public schools.

The impetus for our Center derived naturally from several streams of activity in the early seventies. In one neighborhood public school, parents initiated a request for outside resources which ultimately resulted in a three-year, $250,000 grant from the Ford Foundation. The grant funded a team of seven advisors to work with teachers and parents in the school to help clarify goals and develop a process of parents sharing in the education of their children. At the same time, several open classroom teachers approached the education committee of the local neighborhood association to ask for help informing parents about programs in developmental learning. With some funding from local sources and the help of a local university video crew, a videotape was made that showed three kinds of classrooms, their organization, and the responses of the teachers and children in each situation. This film, widely shown at PTA's, teachers' meetings, citizens' councils, and the like, served as an open-ended introduction to public discussion of varieties of teaching.

The community began to envision what could be accomplished by working together. Teachers realized that parents were willing and able to help in classrooms; parents and other community members were flattered to be asked and stimulated by being involved. Parents and teachers got together to make curriculum materials and classroom games, and called on local parents and businesses for throwaways that could be recycled into educational games and equipment. Since it is not uncommon for children of the same family to attend more than one school, it was easy to spread among parents the ideas and projects generated separately in different schools. A few teachers began to want more time to plan for innovative and personalized learning, more help in developing a team-teaching, multi-age group project in the neighborhood public school.

It became apparent that a new facility was needed, a place that was not restricted by school closing time and not dependent on funding from the strained school budgets; a place that didn't belong to one school alone, but where all teachers and parents could feel welcome. At this point, several efforts to get something started came together. Monies were allocated for a VISTA grant to work on such a project; an internship was offered by the only other independent teachers' center in Chicago (Teacher Curriculum Work Center) for the training of a center director. A place of our own began to look possible.

With the backing of administrators from the public schools subdistrict that served our area, we developed a questionnaire that was sent to teachers throughout the area asking if they would be interested in a center and if they would use one. The poll served not only to identify the needs of the teachers but to stimulate their imagination and whet their appetite. At the same time, a committee of concerned teachers, parents, and other community members organized themselves into a formal board of directors and, with volunteered time and expertise from lawyers and accountants, incorporated and applied for not-for-profit status. Community people who joined in the planning process were among the prime movers for the Center. It was clear that their time, talent, and energy could be tapped for a center unique to our community.

## Learners of All Ages

The majority of people who come to the Center each month are teachers. This is how it should be, for they do have the greatest responsibility for what happens in the schools and they do have the greatest impact on the largest number of children. But the Center is used by non-certified teachers as well: artists and crafts people drop by to explore our changing collection of recyclable materials; graduate students come by for inexpensive paper or a chance to laminate a special project; local neighbors stop in to show off their latest crocheted vest or paper flower (much of this handiwork is displayed in the Center); parents of toddlers come to ask about nursery schools or to find or make educational toys. Just inside the Center door is a panoramic display of community notices, because we place a priority on announcing events and services available in the neighborhood. Staff gather information on many local resources, from senior citizens' programs to ones for learning-disabled children. Thus we carry out our commitment to be a learning resource for all ages.

Being "not just for people in school" gives us our answer when we're asked, "Why isn't this a board of education facility?" This is a common question when our staff goes to a store, factory, hospital, or other agency to request throwaways that we can recycle. Being not just for people in school also gives us a response when, upon being approached for support, a local business asks, "What kinds of things can your Center do for our store?" We can and do offer to do workshops with kids at the store, because we believe we belong in the community as well as in the schools.

We offer our Center as a place for community groups to meet. We encourage a PTA or local school council to meet at the Center with teachers from the school to plan together and make whatever is needed for children both at home and in class. Somehow working together at the Center is smoother, because it is neutral, non-institutional ground, and neither teachers nor parents are hosts to the other.

Because we're not just for people in school, we are a safe place for anyone to ask for advice. No one can be downgraded for not knowing already; everyone has something still to learn; anyone might have something to teach, including children. Once a year this philosophy is illustrated by a public "Do-It-Yourself Learning Fair," a gala benefit at which adults and children alike manage booths where fair-goers stop to make a game or learn a skill. In such informal ways, adults become reacquainted with the learning process itself and observe more thoughtfully their children's growth.

## MARIANNE SCHENKER

### The Center in the Community

As we enter our fourth year, the Center is still an independent, community-based organization. Because of our independence we did not apply for and in fact are not eligible for federal funding under the new teacher center legislation. Although we have received grants on a per-project basis from the U.S. Office of Education and from state sources, most of our efforts are locally based, both with respect to fund raising and in scope. We have been able to generate monthly revenues of $2,300 on the average, to support a staff of ten (half of them part-time), and still belong wholeheartedly to the community we serve. The Center was started by the community, reflects the community, and is in the long run responsible to the community.

Teachers' and parents' mutual respect and mutual expectations are the underpinnings of our Center. I think we prove that the community can be a base for a teachers' center as naturally as the school district or the university. Parents and other educationally alert and concerned citizens are natural allies with teachers. From our experience, here are eight points of advice on what needs to be done to activate teachers' and parents' mutual respect and expectations—to forge their natural alliance.

1. Parents and teachers who are individually seeking improvement in schools must search for and find each other and make common cause.
2. Once that cause is forged and articulated, the group must recruit, develop, encourage, and support its own leadership.
3. Participants in the mutual discussions should start working together on concrete materials—curriculum for classrooms, projects and special educational experiences for children. Students are the common focus, first and always.
4. The group must inform school officials of its purposes and accomplishments and get district trust and support for further efforts to serve teachers and schools.
5. To concentrate your attention and gain outsiders' attention, interest, and involvement, it's important to identify your uniqueness: specific goals, personality, flavor, the jobs you want to do best. ERC's unique contribution has been to highlight and make available to teachers the community's ethnic diversity and richness, and to let people know about services and activities that already exist in the community. We have also concentrated on attracting, involving, and serving the area's artist and craftsperson community.
6. Free professional and technical assistance must be garnered—law, accounting, architecture, copywriting, real estate, design, and so on. A strong

board of directors will be composed of professional and business people, as well as educators.

7. Being alert, imaginative, and opportunistic about resources you can tap, you should reach beyond conventional education sources and emphasize your community base and goals. We have been eligible for VISTA and CETA workers. We've found that we can raise money from McDonald's and the Playboy Foundation; that we can get contracts for educational work with Saks Fifth Avenue and Motion Talking Picture Service; that we can get in-kind service—xeroxing, printing, warehouse space, free audits—from businesses and others.

8. Keeping your ear open to the community as well as to the schools, you must be imaginative and experimental in designing programs that offer a fresh learning experience. For instance, we have found that as part of our attention to the educational qualities of non-classroom life, we can expand our adult-and-child workshop format to provide programs for bithday parties in which parents, not just there as chaperones, work side-by-side with their children to make puppets or musical instruments from recycled materials.

Teachers are the leading actors in the educational process and the principal focus of the Center's attention. But while we define a priority to be deepening the professionalism of classroom teachers, at the same time we feel responsible to expand parental consciousness of the total educational process and their rights and responsibilities in that process. It has been difficult to start a center with these ideals and with no more financial support than what we could raise ourselves. But somehow that very difficulty has made the community more attentive to the idea of a center, and has made the Center constantly aware of the necessity and the opportunities for community people to share all thinking, planning and teaching.

# NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

*Kathleen Devaney* has been director of the Teachers' Centers Exchange, based at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development in San Francisco, since the Exchange's earliest activities in 1974. She has worked as an education writer and program administrator at the Laboratory and at the University of California, Berkeley, supporting and inspiring excellent teaching and staff development.

*Georgia Delano, Stanley Chu*, and *James Neujahr*, "What Our Hearts Required: A Recollection of Beginnings," are long-time associates of the Workshop Center for Open Education at City College, New York.

Georgia Delano, a former nursery school and high school teacher and alternative elementary school principal, was the first coordinator of the Workshop Center from 1972 to 1975. Since then she has served the Center as an administrative advisor, a documentor, and author of *Bronson Alcott and Henry David Thoreau: 19th-Century Pioneers in Open Education.* Currently she is administrator of the New Ballet School, Associate School of the Eliot Feld Ballet, which provides scholarships for low-income children to study ballet in Manhattan.

After teaching elementary school, high school science and history, and Sierra Leone students in the African Primary Science Program, Stan Chu worked as an advisor at the Workshop Center for five years. In spring 1978 he became the first director of the Garden State Teacher Center at Ramapo College, Mahwah, New Jersey.

Jim Neujahr has been a staff member of the Workshop Center for four years, working primarily on developing early childhood science curriculum with teachers. He is an associate professor of elementary education at City College.

*Amity Buxton*, "Philosophy in the Round: Commitment, Concept, Community," is director of the Teacher Shelter/Teachers' Active Learning Center, a nine-year-old center based for the past four years in the Oakland, California, public schools. Amity has written about teachers' centers in the United States, England, and Japan and is currently collaborating with three classroom teachers on researching children's journal writing.

*Christine San Jose*, "Staffing a Teachers' Center," helped establish (in 1973) and then coordinated the West Genessee/Syracuse University Teaching Center, a preservice/inservice teachers' center. Christine currently teaches at Syracuse University, works as an educational consultant, and is writing a methods text in language arts.

*Lorraine Keeney*, "Finding Out What Teachers Need," is the associate director of the Teachers' Centers Exchange, working out of its East Coast Office in Washington, D.C. During the last four years Lorraine has welcomed, encouraged, advised, commiserated, and celebrated with teachers' center staffs and participants from more than 40 states.

*William Hering*, "Evaluating the Center," taught secondary and preservice university courses in social studies and developed interdisciplinary secondary curriculum before joining the Teachers' Centers Exchange in 1977. Bill facilitates interaction and sharing among experienced and beginning centers and serves as a liaison between the Exchange and the staffs of other organizations. He also manages a Teachers' Centers Exchange program that awards grants to experienced teachers' centers and researchers for collaborative research in documenting exemplary center practices. In his spare time he watches birds and baseball.

*Mary Seager*, "Finding a Place and Furnishing the Space," served on the board of directors of the St. Louis Learning Center from 1975-78. She is currently assistant professor of reading at St. Louis Community College, Florissant Valley. Mary's particular educational interests are bilingual language development and school-community organizing.

*Gail Johnston* and *Christine Walker*, "Programming in a Teachers' Center," have been instrumental in shaping the Kansas City, Missouri, Learning Exchange—Gail as one of two originators (in 1972) and then as director, and Chris as a staff member whose specialties became public relations and making classroom learning materials from recycled industrial surplus. Chris has taken the Exchange's "I do, and I understand" philosophy to heart and is now working full time as an artist in San Francisco. Gail, a former Montessori teacher, has recently developed a graduate course in Creative Thinking and Living. She is especially interested in the development and sustenance of resource networks within communities of educators, both local and national.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

*Peter Martin*, "Criteria for Successful Workshops," is a photographer, pianist, and carpenter who was a special education teacher in grades one through six before joining the staff of the Center for Open Education at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. In 1976 Peter founded and has since directed Project RISE (Regional In-Service Education), which serves nine rural towns in east-central Connecticut. MARY KEENAN was the Center's first full-time advisor. This year she is working as a special education resource teacher at Andover Elementary School and is one of the Center's most frequent users.

*Maja Apelman*, "An Advisor at Work," has been an advisor and curriculum developer at Mountain View Center for Environmental Education, University of Colorado, Boulder, since 1971. An early childhood and social studies specialist, she is particularly interested in working with primary teachers to develop science and social studies curriculum centered around children's immediate environment and the history of the community in which they live. Maja has taught teachers and children at Bank Street College, has been a Head Start teacher trainer, and is presently an in-classroom advisor working with Follow Through teachers in the Boulder public schools. She is currently making "tentative explorations into the fields of science and math" and has become interested in what David Hawkins calls "Critical Barriers to Science Learning" (*OUTLOOK*, No. 29, Autumn 1978, Mountain View Center for Environmental Education).

*Susan Carpenter*, "The Art and Science of Managing a Teachers' Center," was a participant in the early 1970s, staff member, and then co-director from 1974 to 1977 of the Teacher Curriculum Work Center in Chicago, where she became experienced in designing systems to help people do things more efficiently. Susan is presently earning an interdisciplinary arts degree and working at the Renascence Project in Kansas City, Missouri, in the fields of community development and education.

*Richard Steets*, "The Budget and the Board," is a retired controller of a division of General Foods Corporation. During 1976-77, Dick worked as a Ford Foundation consultant on cost analysis and budgeting in four teachers' centers—two of which were Foundation grantees—that function without direct sponsorship by a school district or university.

*Harriet Bograd*, "Is There Life After Seed Money?," is an attorney who served on the original board of the Teacher Center, Inc., in New Haven. She worked for two-and-a-half years as the Center's program developer. Harriet has consulted with other teachers' centers on funding issues and strategies and is currently working as a consultant to community organizations in her new home, New York City.

*Ruth Nedelsky*, "Funding Postscript 2," became involved in the teachers' center movement in the 1960s when she experienced first-hand, as a substitute teacher in Chicago public schools, classroom teachers' need for support, advice, and sharing of professional learning experiences. She was co-director (with Susan Carpenter) of Teacher Curriculum Work Center in 1974-75 and acting director from March to August 1978. Currently she is working with students who have serious reading disabilities and designing a graduate program for classroom teachers who want to study reading.

*Ron Jones*, "How to Write and Publish Your Own *Dick & Jane*," has for seven years nurtured, guided, housed, edited, and self-published through Zephyros Education Exchange, a non-profit collaborative of teachers, parents, kids—anyone who wants to print and trade ideas related to learning. Ron has written *The Acorn People* (Bantam) and *No Substitute for Madness* and *There Is No School on the Sixth Floor* (Zephyros) about his teaching experiences, the most recent of which are in the psychiatric ward of an urban hospital.

*Patricia Zigarmi* and *Drea Zigarmi*, "Developing Administrators' Support," have helped policy boards and less formally organized groups of teachers plan and implement teachers' centers. Pat was director of staff development from 1974 to 1976 for the South Dakota State Department of Education, where she worked with two groups of teachers to start centers. She now does research for the Concerns Based Adoption Model Project at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, University of Texas, Austin, and works part-time as a consultant to schools in the area of staff development. She has developed a filmstrip on teachers' centers for the National Education Association and a slide show on teachers' centers available through the Exchange. Drea is director of the McGuffey Laboratory School and assistant chairman of the Department of Teacher Education at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. He was formerly director of Title III-IVC Innovative Programs in Education, South Dakota State Department of Education. Both Pat and Drea have been active in a group of educators who are creating a teachers' center in Oxford, Ohio.

*Celia Houghton*, "Postscript: Teachers' Voluntarism," taught English, Italian, and Norwegian students at all levels. She came to the United States eleven years ago, began working in teachers' centers at the Workshop Center for Open Education in New York City, and then opened and directed the former Teachers' Center at Greenwich, Connecticut. Celia is on the faculty of Goddard College and director of the new Goddard College Teachers' Center, Plainfield, Vermont.

*Sharon Meier, Barbara Hall, and Robert Mai*, "Administrative Backing for a Teachers' Center: The Las Cruces Example." Sharon Meier is director of the one-year-old Teachers' Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico, has been a traditional and open classroom teacher in grades two through six, a bilingual instructor of adults, a cooperating teacher for many student teachers, and a media materials and teacher-made materials specialist. She also sings avidly and manages to involve her family in the life of the Las Cruces Center.

Barbara Hall is chairperson of the executive committee for the Las Cruces Teachers' Center and has been a board member since its beginning. A first-grade team teacher of reading, she has been a cooperating teacher through New Mexico State University, having inservice students learn in her classroom.

Robert Mai, director of Telecommunications at station KETC-TV (public television) in St. Louis, was formerly director of the St. Louis Educational Confederation, a consortium of schools and other educational agencies concerned with arts-in-education and staff development programs for teachers. Bob is a specialist in developing the capacity of educational organizations to improve teachers and schooling, particularly through the use of advisors—a role he has written about extensively.

*Marianne Schenker*, "Not Just for People in School," has long been active in her children's neighborhood schools. In the mid-1970s Marianne held a VISTA position to help start Education Resource Center to serve these schools and the neighboring community in Chicago. She has been president of the Center board and chairman of the board for the local neighborhood citizens' council.

*Workparty Participants* have contributed in many ways to this book. Several of the articles have drawn heavily from notes of Workparty presentations and discussion, as well as from journals kept by each participant during the meeting and "afterthoughts" which they have written to Exchange staff. Selections from Proceedings of the first three Workparties, compiled and edited by Gretchen Thomas of the Teachers' Centers Exchange, are woven into seven of the articles. The concerns expressed by network members at the Workparties helped us select and focus the contents of this book, especially the particular needs of those beginning to build a teachers' center. In this way the teachers' center leaders who participated in the first Exchange Workparties add their center's understandings to those of the authors listed above.